



EMINENT ACTORS

EDITED BY WILLIAM ARCHER

THOMAS BETTERTON

EMINENT ACTORS.

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[*Immediately.*]

T H O M A S
B E T T E R T O N

BY
ROBERT W. LOWE

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P R E F A C E.

ALTHOUGH the documentary material for the history of the Restoration stage has been pretty thoroughly ransacked by previous inquirers, my researches into the life and times of Betterton have brought to light a considerable number of new facts, and have enabled me to confirm or to contradict several old hypotheses. In no case have I relied upon the mere assertion of previous historians, but have always checked their statements by a reference to the original evidence on which they proceeded. I have at all times been careful to distinguish between ascertained fact and mere conjecture ; so that the reader may accept as undoubted any unqualified assertion contained in the following pages. The course of events during the few months immediately succeeding the reopening of the theatres is here, I believe, set forth with greater accuracy than in any previous work ; for I have been so fortunate as to disentangle a knot which had baffled Genest and other historians. They had understood Pepys's allusions to "the Cockpit" as referring to the theatre of that name

in Drury Lane; whereas they really referred to the Royal Playhouse at the Cockpit in St. James's Park. This fact, with one or two other minor discoveries, brings comparative clearness into a period which has hitherto seemed very obscure and confusing.

The chapter dealing with the Restoration Playhouse, its structure and arrangements, and the manners and customs which prevailed before and behind the scenes, will, I hope, interest both the general reader and the specialist. No such systematic attempt has hitherto been made, so far as I am aware, to paint an accurate picture of the surroundings amid which Betterton acted—to describe the material conditions of the stage for which Wycherley and Congreve wrote.

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THOMAS BETTERTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE STAGE BEFORE THE RESTORATION.

UNTIL the Puritan Revolution stopped the theatres, and threw the actors out of employment, the stage in England seems to have been in very prosperous condition. Shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War, according to the *Historia Histrionica*, there were at least five companies of players in existence. The chief of these were the King's Servants, "men of grave and sober behaviour," who acted at the Blackfriars Theatre in winter, and at the Globe on the Bankside in summer. Next came the Queen's Servants, whose theatre was the Cockpit, or Phoenix, in Drury Lane; then the Prince's Servants, who played at the Private House in Salisbury Court. Two theatres of lower rank complete the list—the Fortune, near Whitecross Street; and the Red Bull, at the upper end of St. John Street, Clerkenwell, which were mostly frequented by "citizens and the meaner sort of people." All these companies "got money, and lived in reputation;" for the theatre was at this time held in much higher esteem than in the scandalous times after the

Restoration. Plays, if not very refined in language, were at least not immoral in intention ; vice was poetically punished ; virtue was not made a scoff. Consequently, very good people thought the play an innocent diversion for an idle hour ; and as the prices of admission were small, for there were no expenses of scenery or setting, the town supported five companies handsomely, though, after the Restoration, with a largely increased population, it could not support two.

To us the recital of the names of the actors who saw the stage go down in the turmoil of the Civil War conveys little idea. They were a generation whose history has failed to attract much attention, for they come as it were between the great generation which Shakespeare adorned, and the Restoration period, in which there is so much that is curious and interesting. A few of the actors whose names appear in the First Folio still survived. One of these was John Lowin, famous for playing Falstaff and Henry VIII. When Betterton first acted bluff King Hal, the traditions of the earliest players of the part were handed on to him by Sir William Davenant, who had seen old Lowin act, and Lowin, although not the original representative of the character, had "had his instructions from Mr. Shakespear himself." In the part of Hamlet also Betterton benefited by Davenant's recollection of the acting of Joseph Taylor, who probably was the successor of the original Hamlet, Burbage, and who survived the breaking out of the Civil War some thirteen years. Other contemporaries of these famous players were Richard Robinson, in his youth a noted "boy-actress," who died in 1647 ; and John Shank, who did not live to see the actual beginning of the wars. These older actors were all members of the Blackfriars company, where their chief companions were Stephen

Hammerton, "a most noted and beautiful woman Actor;" Eliard Swanston, the recognized representative of Othello; and Thomas Pollard, a celebrated comic actor. At the Cockpit, which ranked second in importance to the Blackfriars Theatre, the leading actors were Perkins, Bowyer, Sumner, William Allen (not to be confused with Edward Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College), Bird, and William Robins (or Robinson). Younger actors who attained to eminence after the Restoration were Hart, Mohun, Burt, Clun, and Shatterel.

When the Civil War broke out, the actors, as might be expected, ranged themselves on the side of the king. One only is recorded to have joined the Parliamentarians, Swanston; and he, says Wright, "profest himself a Presbyterian, took up the trade of a jeweller, and liv'd in Aldermanbury, within the territory of Father Calamy."* Lowin, Taylor, and Pollard were unable to give the king more than their good wishes, for they were too old to fight. Lowin went to Brentford, where he kept the inn called the Three Pigeons, and died very old and very poor. Taylor died and was buried at Richmond; while Pollard, who was a bachelor, and had saved some money, ended his days in comfort with relations who lived in the country. William Robins (or Robinson) lost his life at the taking of Basing House, in 1645. Wright tells us that he was killed by "Butcher" Harrison, who refused him quarter, and shot him through the head after he had laid down his arms, saying, as he murdered the defenceless player, "Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently!"

As soon as the actual fighting was over, and the power

* Edmund Calamy was a noted preacher. He was appointed Rector of St. Mary's, Aldermanbury, in 1639, and was ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

firmly held in the hands of the Presbyterians and Independents, the actors gravitated towards London, and made some feeble attempts to resume, by stealth, the practice of their calling, which had been declared unlawful by several Edicts of the Parliament.* But their success was small. In the winter of 1648 a company of them, including Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, Burt, and Hart, ventured to play privately at the Cockpit. But, after remaining unmolested for three or four days, they were at last surprised by a party of soldiers in the middle of acting Fletcher's tragedy of *The Bloody Brother*, and carried off to prison in their stage-clothes. Here they remained some time, until, having plundered them of their valuables, the soldiers released them.† Afterwards they were more careful, and played mostly in gentlemen's houses, where the guests made up a purse to reward their services. Occasionally, too, they succeeded in bribing the officer who commanded the guard at Whitehall, and he winked at their performing for a day or two at the Red Bull; but even then they were never safe from disturbance.

In 1656 we find, strangely enough, that Cromwell permitted a sort of theatrical performance at Rutland House, under the control of Sir William Davenant. This permission seems to have been obtained through the influence of the Lord Keeper, Sir Bulstrode Whitelock, in whose *Memorials* we find, under date September 3, 1656, an interesting letter from Davenant, in which he says—

* On September 2, 1642, plays were forbidden during "these times of humiliation;" they were altogether suppressed by an Ordinance of October 22, 1647; and a still stricter decree to the same effect was passed on February 11, 1648.

† Whitelock, in his *Memorials*, mentions a similar occurrence on December 20, 1649.

"When I consider the nicety of the times, I fear it may draw a curtain between your Lordship and our opera ; therefore I have presumed to send your Lordship, hot from the press, what we mean to represent, making your Lordship my supreme judge, though I despair to have the honour of inviting you to be a spectator."

The work which Davenant sent was no doubt his opera of *The Siege of Rhodes*, which was published in September, 1656, and has a preface dated August 17, 1656. But this opera was not the first of Davenant's productions. It had been preceded by an entertainment, probably produced on May 21, 1656. The stage-directions of this entertainment will sufficiently explain its nature. The first is, "After a flourish of music, the curtains are drawn and the Prologue enters." He speaks his piece, and retires. Then, "a concert of instrumental music, adapted to the sullen disposition of *Diogenes*, being heard a while, the curtains are suddenly opened, and in two gilded rostras appear, sitting, *Diogenes* the Cynic, and *Aristophanes* the Poet, in habits agreeable to their country and professions, who declaim against, and for, public entertainment, by moral representations." After *Diogenes* has had his say, "a concert of music, befitting the pleasant disposition of *Aristophanes*, being heard, he thus answers." When *Aristophanes* has effectually routed his sour antagonist, "the curtains are suddenly closed, and the company entertained by instrumental and vocal music." After which, "a concert of instrumental music, after the French composition, being heard a while, the curtains are suddenly opened, and in the rostras appear, sitting, a *Parisian* and a *Londoner*, in the livery robes of both cities, who declaim concerning the pre-eminence of *Paris* and *London*." The *Parisian* opens the ball, and, after a concert imitating the Waits of London, his oppo-

nent replies. The curtains are then closed, more instrumental and vocal music follows, and the entertainment concludes with an epilogue.

It will be seen that the scenic arrangements of this Entertainment were of the simplest. From them to the ambitious attempts made in *The Siege of Rhodes* was a great advance. This opera, produced in September, 1656, was described as "The Siege of Rhodes. Made a Representation by the Art of Prospective in Scenes, and the Story sung in Recitative Musick." The scenes, no doubt, demanded a good deal of make-believe; but, crude as they probably were, they were the most important scenes ever set on an English stage, for they were the first. At Court Masques elaborate scenery had long before appeared, but the stage knew nothing more than coarse hangings or rude tapestry.* Davenant himself gives an amusing description of the difficulties of his scenery, which was designed and painted by John Webb. He says—

"It has been often wisht that our Scenes (we having oblig'd ourselves to the variety of five changes according to the Ancient Dramatic distinctions made for time) had not been confined to eleven foot in height, and about fifteen in depth, including the places of passage reserv'd for the Musick. This is so narrow an allowance for the fleet of Solyman the Magnificent, his army, the Island of Rhodes, and the Varieties attending the Siege of the City, that I fear you will think we invite you to such a contracted trifle as that of the Cæsars carved upon a nut."

To the literary merits of the opera Dryden has given the highest praise. In his dedication to *The Rival Ladies* he says that if Waller first showed the proper beauty of

* The question of the introduction of scenery has greatly exercised Shakespearian commentators. Malone enters very fully into the matter.

rhymed verse, "we are acknowledging for the noblest use of it to Sir *William D'avenant*; who at once brought it upon the stage, and made it perfect, in *The Siege of Rhodes*." As a specimen of the rhymes, take this—

"*Solyman*. Away! range all the camp for an assault;
Tell them they tread in graves who make a halt.
Fat slaves, who have been lull'd to a disease,
Cramm'd out of breath, and crippled by their ease!
Whose active fathers leapt o'er walls too high
For them to climb: Hence from my anger fly!
Which is too worthy for thee, being mine,
And must be quench'd by Rhodian blood or thine."

Another specimen, of different style, is a chorus, by soldiers of several nations—

"1. Come, ye termagant Turks,
If your Bassa dares land ye,
Whilst the wine bravely works
Which was brought us from Candy.

"2. Wealth, the least of our care is,
For the poor ne'er are undone;
Avous, Monsieur of Paris,
To the back-swords of London.

"5. It is seven to one odds
They had safer sail'd by us:
Whilst our wine lasts in Rhodes
They shall water at Chios."

To Davenant and his opera Dryden again alludes in a passage of interest in his *Essay on Heroick Plays*, in which he says—

"For Heroick Plays, . . . the first light we had of them on the English Theatre was from the late Sir William D'avenant: It being forbidden him in the rebellious times to act tragedies and comedies, because they contained some

matter of scandal to those good people, who could more easily dispossess their lawful Sovereign, than endure a wanton jest ; he was forced to turn his thoughts another way, and to introduce the examples of moral virtue, writ in verse, and perform'd in Recitative Musick. The original of this Musick, and of the scenes which adorn'd this work, he had from the Italian operas."

The performers in *The Siege of Rhodes* were personages of some note, as the following list shows (naturally they were all musicians) :—

Solyman the Magnificent	...	CAPT. HENRY COOK.
Villerius	...	MR. GREGORY THORNDALL.
Alphonso	...	MR. EDWARD COLEMAN.
Admiral	...	MR. MATTHEW LOCK.
Pirrhus	...	MR. JOHN HARDING.
Mustapha	...	MR. HENRY PERSILL.
Ianthe	...	MRS. COLEMAN, wife of MR. COLEMAN.

The vocal music was the composition of Henry Lawes, Captain Cook, and Matthew Lock, while Dr. Charles Coleman and George Hudson were responsible for the instrumental.

The claims of this opera to consideration can scarcely be overstated. Mr. Joseph Knight, in his preface to his edition of the *Roscius Anglicanus*, thus summarizes them—

"Coming after an entertainment which cannot by any stretch be called dramatic, it marks the re-establishment of the theatre after Puritan rule ; it is the first opera ever given in this country ; it introduces the first English actress who ever chaunted (not spoke) on the English stage ; it exhibits the first scenery ever employed in the case of a regular dramatic production, not being a miracle-play or a masque ; and it names the first provider of scenery for a work of this class, as distinguished again from the masque, in which, at a much earlier date, elaborate decorations were employed."

Toleration seems to have made Davenant resolve on the bolder step of taking a regular theatre as the scene of his operations. We accordingly find him two years later at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, his productions being still of the nature of an opera. The first of which we have record was *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*; "expressed by vocall and instrumentall Musick, and by art of perspective in scenes." To the end of the first edition of this opera was appended a note: "Notwithstanding the great expense necessary to scenes, and other ornaments in this entertainment, there is good provision made of places for a shilling." So that already the question of the expense of scenery was necessitating consideration. *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* is said to have been permitted by the Protector as a means of stirring up popular feeling against the Spanish enemies of England and the Protestant religion. The purpose of the piece was to show first the happy condition of the people of Peru "when their inclinations were govern'd by Nature;" then their history under the Incas; the conquest of the empire by the Spaniards, and their cruel treatment of the natives; the conclusion being a prophetic rescue of the Peruvians from their Spanish oppressors by English soldiers. The opening speech of the Priest of the Sun is well worth quoting. He is pointing to the scene of the primitive happiness of the Peruvians, and says—

"Thus fresh did Nature in our world appear,
 When first her roses did their leaves unfold :
 Ere she did use art's colours, and ere fear
 Had made her pale, or she with cares lookt old.
 When various sports did man's lov'd freedom show,
 And still the free were willing to obey ;
 Youth did to age, and sons to parents bow.
 Parents and age first taught the laws of sway.

When yet we no just motive had to fear
 Our bolder Incas would by arms be rais'd ;
 When, temp'rately, they still contented were,
 As great examples, to be only prais'd.
 When none for being strong did seek reward,
 Nor any for the space of empire strove :
 When valour courted peace and never car'd
 For any recompence, but public love.
 We fetter'd none, nor were by any bound ;
 None follow'd gold through lab'rynths of the mine :
 And that which we on strands of rivers found,
 Did only on our priests in temple shine."

The Priest is the solitary speaker throughout, introducing and explaining each of the six scenes. Every speech is followed by a song, and every scene ends in a dance, joyous or mournful, as the subject demands.

In this piece the speaker seems to have acted merely as showman, and to have recited in ordinary tone ; but in the other opera which we know that Davenant produced at this time, the dialogue (for there were more speakers than one) was carried on in recitative. This opera was entitled, *The History of Sir Francis Drake*, and, excepting that it contained many more lines, was of precisely the same nature as its predecessor. It was published in 1659, but at what part of that year we can form no idea.

Before leaving Davenant and his operas, I may quote the following Order from the *Publick Intelligencer* of December 20 to 27, 1658, that is, shortly after Richard Cromwell became Protector :—

"Whitehall, December 23. A courte is ordered for taking into consideration the *opera*, shewed at the Cockpitt in Drury Lane, and the persons to whom it stands referred, are to send for the poet and actors, and to inform themselves of the nature of the work, and to examine by what authority

the same is exposed to publick view ; and they are also to take the best information they can, concerning the acting of stage-playes, and upon the whole to make report."

It may be concluded that the report was not unfavourable, since *The History of Sir Francis Drake* was dated 1659.

With this play our glance at the theatre during the Commonwealth concludes, and we pass to the stage on which Thomas Betterton acted—the stage of the Restoration.

CHAPTER II.

A RESTORATION THEATRE.

FASHION changes so quickly in things theatrical that the usages and methods of fifty years ago appear almost antediluvian to the playgoer of to-day. The plays that are acted, the technique of the actors, the style of the elocution, the arrangements and appearance of the theatre, all have changed ; so that if Edmund Kean could be summoned by some magician to see a play acted in our Lyceum Theatre to-day, alike on the stage and in the auditorium he would see enormous changes. And if this is true of Kean, how much more is it true of Betterton ! To that great actor our theatre would be a veritable *terra incognita*. And, as we are about to consider the life and work of Betterton, let us in the first instance try to convey ourselves back to his stage, to realize the conditions under which he played his part, to reconstruct in our mind's eye the theatre in which he shone so bright a star.

Placing ourselves, then, in the position of a theatre-goer of two centuries ago, we first ask how we are to know what play we shall choose to see. And this brings us to our first question—advertising. At a time when, practically, a different play was acted each day, and when newspaper advertisements were as yet undreamt of, how did the actors communicate with the public ? In two ways : by

giving out the next day's play at the end of each performance (a method which survived almost to our own time); and by displaying bills on posts in the street, as had been the practice before the Civil Wars. Of both methods our most valuable authority on Restoration customs, Samuel Pepys, gives examples. On September 15, 1668, Pepys went to the King's Playhouse to see a new play by Dryden, called, *The Ladies à la Mode*, of which, by the way, this is the only record; and when the actor, Beeston, came forward to give the new play out for repetition on the following day, Pepys records that both Beeston and the audience "fell a-laughing," because the house was not a quarter full at that performance, and would naturally be still emptier the next day. To the advertising on the posts Pepys alludes twice. Once (March 24, 1662) he goes out to see what play is to be acted, and finds none upon the post, it being Passion Week; and another time (July 28, 1664), being abroad, he observes on the posts that *The Bondman* is to be acted at the Duke's House, and goes to see it.

That these bills sometimes contained something more than a mere announcement of the play* is probable. In the *Key to "The Rehearsal,"* published in 1704, the publisher states that his author declaimed against the practice of the English stage, saying that he believed that the regular theatres were in a confederacy to ruin the Fair of Smithfield, "by outdoing them in their bombastick bills, and ridiculous representing their plays." The only one of these bills which I have been able to see is, how-

* We learn from a letter from Dryden to Mrs. Steward, that the first occasion on which an author's name appeared on the bill of the play, "at least in England," was the revival of *The Double Dealer*, in March, 1699, when the play was announced as "written by Mr. Congreve."

ever, a model of plainness and brevity. It occurred in the famous Mansfield-Mackenzie sale, and, though somewhat mutilated, was sufficiently preserved to be quite intelligible. It ran thus—

“W. R.

At the Desire of several Persons of Quality
at the

NEW THEATRE

In Little Lincolns-Inn Fields,

this present TUESDAY being the 27th of February, will be presented,

a Tragedy call'd,

THE MOURNING BRIDE.

. h Entry perform'd by

. e Boy.

Vivat Rex.”

This bill, which must have been that for February 27, 1700, the only year of William's reign in which that date fell on a Tuesday, is the earliest bill of which, so far as I know, a copy has been published. The commonly quoted programme for the opening of the Drury Lane Theatre on April 8, 1663, is, as I shall show in a subsequent chapter, a forgery.

The use of different coloured announcements, now so common that nearly every London theatre has its distinctive colour of bill, dates back at least as far as 1672. In that year a troop of French players, which seems to have comprised both comic and tragic performers, visited London, and attracted great audiences, to the serious detriment of the native theatre. Dryden wrote a prologue against them, and from it we learn that these exotic performers used red bills to attract public attention. Dryden writes—

"A brisk French troop is grown your dear delight ;
Who with broad bloody bills call you each day,
To laugh and break your buttons at their play."

Having settled, then, which playhouse we will patronize, we must next discover the hour at which the play begins, and also make up our minds how long before the appointed time we must go to get places ; for such a thing as booking or reserving seats was not dreamt of for many years after this time.

Immediately after the Restoration, plays seem to have commenced at half-past three o'clock. The prologue to Dryden's *Wild Gallant*, produced on February 5, 1663, gives us this information. Two Astrologers are introduced, who cast the nativity of the new play in order to ascertain its success or failure. To these the prologue is presented.

"And from this scheme, drawn for the hour and day,
Bid me enquire the fortune of his play."

The 1st Astrologer then reads, "A figure of the heavenly bodies in their several apartments, February 5, half an hour after three, afternoon, from whence you are to judge the success of a new play called *The Wild Gallant*."

How long this early hour saw the rising or opening of the curtain I do not know, but before the end of the century five o'clock was the fashionable hour ; and it seems probable that by 1706 the play began so late as six o'clock. For the five-o'clock hour we have many authorities. Let us quote, for example, the facetious Tom Brown's *Dialogues of the Dead*. In the "Trial of Cuckolds," Lord Flippant's Ghost, in describing his day's occupation on earth, says, "Whilst I was at *Will's* coffee house, fastened in controversy or poetick rhapsodies, though I had neither religion nor learning, she was

sure of me till play-time, and then too ; for at five, 'Come, Dick,' says I (to a brother of the orange and cravat string), 'd—me, let us to the play.'"

From the epilogue to Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer*, produced April 8, 1706, we learn that the hour of performance was then six o'clock. It begins, "All ladies and gentlemen that are willing to see the Comedy called *The Recruiting Officer*, let them repair to-morrow night, by six o'clock, to the sign of the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane, and they shall be kindly entertain'd."

This rapid progress in the direction of later hours is, of course, only one consequence of the gradual change of habits, which has now landed us in the extremity of frequently beginning our chief piece at a fashionable theatre at nine o'clock at night. The progress towards late hours at the time under review becomes still more noticeable when we remember that immediately before the Restoration the hour for beginning the play was three o'clock. This we learn from a piece which has already come under our notice, Davenant's *Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, which was "Represented daily at the Cockpit in Drury-Lane, At Three afternoone punctually." At the end of the piece the time is specially intimated: "And it shall begin certainly at 3 after noon."

Having thus settled the hour of the play, we must make up our minds how long we are prepared to sit in the theatre unemployed, in order to ensure good places. If we mean to get advantageous seats at a new play regarding which there is much public curiosity, we must go appallingly early. Up to at least 1669, the doors of the theatre were thrown open about twelve o'clock. On the first day of Sir Charles Sedley's comedy of *The Mulberry Garden* (May 18, 1668), of which, the author "being so reputed a wit, all the world do expect great matters,"

Pepys went to the King's Playhouse about noon, shortly after which time the doors opened. A fortnight earlier he went to the Duke's House at a little past twelve to get a good place in the pit, the play being Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers*. The same indefatigable playgoer records (February 25, 1669) that before one o'clock the Duke's House was "infinite full," the attraction being again a play by Shadwell—his tragi-comedy of *The Royal Shepherdess*. It must have been an idle age, for all sorts and conditions of men seem to have submitted to the inconvenience of passing the whole afternoon in the playhouse. I know only one allusion to the waste of time involved in play-going. It is in "A Satyr," published in *Poems on Affairs of State*, vol. iii. (1704), with the motto, "Quem Natura negat dabit Indignatio Versum." The writer, abusing Otway, says—

"Was't not enough, that at his tedious Play,
I lavish'd half a Crown, and half a Day?"

Of course, measures were taken by some to obviate this inconvenience to a certain extent, but we have every reason to think that most people simply accepted the situation. The only method of avoiding the penitential wait was to hire some one to keep your place. This Pepys did twice. On the first day of *The Mulberry Garden* the pangs of hunger were not to be withstood, so he got a boy to keep his place in the pit, while he himself slipped out to the Rose Tavern, "got half a breast of mutton, off of the spit, and dined all alone. And so to the play again." On another occasion he set a poor man to keep his place, Pepys going to Martin's, his bookseller's, and there spending an hour.

The plan of sending a footman to keep places, which before the end of the seventeenth century was quite

general, does not seem to have been adopted before 1672 ; for in that year Dryden, in the prologue to Carlell's *Arviragus and Philicia*, from which I have already quoted the passage regarding red bills, quotes apparently the substance of an announcement from the French players' bills—

“ ‘ And therefore, Messieurs, if you'll do us grace,
Send lacqueys early to preserve your place. ’ ”

It is a fair inference from Dryden's special allusion to this announcement that the practice he mentions was novel to English playgoers.

The different parts into which the auditorium of the theatre was divided seem to have undergone little change for very many years. The floor of the house was entirely devoted to the pit ; the first tier was divided into boxes ; so, it seems, was part of the second or middle gallery ; and the upper gallery was given up to the proletariat, and, as will be described later, to the footmen of the quality in the boxes and pit. The prices for these various parts also remained unaltered for a long time. The admission to the boxes was four shillings ; to the pit, half a crown ; to the middle gallery, eighteenpence ; and to the upper gallery, a shilling. Allusions to these charges are common in the prologues and epilogues of the period—especially in the case of the half-crown admission to the pit.

That four shillings was the charge for the boxes is clearly stated in the second epilogue to Dryden and Lee's *Duke of Guise*. Referring to the disgraceful rowdyism of the pit, Dryden writes—

“ This makes our boxes full ; for men of sense
Pay their four shillings in their own defence :
That safe behind the ladies they may stay,
Peep o'er the fan, and judge the bloody fray.”

The same poet alludes, in the epilogue to Southerne's *Disappointment; or, The Mother in Fashion* (1684), to the middle gallery thus—

“ Let all the boxes, Phœbus, find thy grace,
And, ah, preserve the eighteenpenny place ! ”

From Pepys we hear a good deal about the eighteenpenny place, the diarist being somewhat of Mrs. Gilpin's complexion, fond of combining pleasure and economy. From him, also, we learn that some part at least of the middle gallery was divided into boxes. On November 29, 1661, Sir William Pen and Mr. Pepys, being unable to find room in the pit, “ went up to one of the boxes and into the 18*d.* places.” On December 21, 1668, Pepys has a passage which proves conclusively the existence of boxes in the middle gallery. He relates how the notorious Moll Davis was in the box over the king's, which was, of course, on the first tier. The king cast glances at the ex-actress, and Lady Castlemaine, who was in the king's box, “ looked like fire ” when she glanced up to see who it was that attracted Charles's attention, and saw a rival mistress. I think it probable that these upper boxes were situated only at the sides of the middle gallery, and that the centre space was simply arranged in benches like the pit, as is the case in the third gallery of the Théâtre Français.

To the shilling gallery Dryden alludes in his prologue to Tate's tragedy of *The Loyal General* (1680), where he advises the degenerate pit to remove its benches, “ and take, above, twelve pennyworth of wit.” To this humble, though lofty position, Pepys, in his earlier days of theatre-going, occasionally went, especially if the admission money was doubled, as was the case when a new play was produced. Thus he chronicles (December 16, 1661) how, on

the first day of Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman Street*, Mrs. Pepys and he, to save money, for "the pay was doubled," went into the gallery, and there sat and saw very well. In the beginning of the same year the worthy Clerk of the Acts was sorely troubled in his mind at being seen in the shilling seats by four clerks in his office who had spent half a crown on their admission. Pepys notes that these clerks were in "the half-crowne box," which, I think, must be an error of expression, for I have met with no other allusion whatever to boxes at half a crown. Pepys may have meant the eighteenpenny box, or may have intended to convey the idea that they were in the pit. Or, though I think this unlikely, there may have been one or two omnibus boxes, the admission to which would be the same as to the pit.

Regarding the price of admission to the pit, we have abundant testimony; Pepys, for instance, giving most definite information. On the first day of the year 1668 he moralizes on the advancing vanity and prodigality of the age. He is in the pit of the Duke's Playhouse, and "here," he notes, "a mighty company of citizens, 'prentices, and others; and it makes me observe, that when I began first to be able to bestow a play on myself, I do not remember that I saw so many by half of the ordinary 'prentices and mean people in the pit at 2s. 6d. a-piece as now; I going for several years no higher than the 12d., and then the 18d. places, though I strained hard to go in when I did." In the epilogue to *The Generous Enemies*, a comedy by John Corye, produced in 1671, Mrs. Boutell spoke the lines—

"Though there I see—Propitious Angels sit,
[Points at the boxes.]
 Still there's a Nest of Devils in the Pit,

By whom our Plays, like Children, just alive,
Pinch'd by the Fairies, never after thrive :
'Tis but your Half-crown, Sirs : that won't undo."

Another prologue gives us corroboration of Pepys's statement as to the doubling of prices on the first day of a new play. This is the prologue written by Dr. Charles Davenant for his tragic opera of *Circe* (1677), in which he says—

"But move not you, the brothers of the trade,
Who, scattering your infection through the pit,
With aching hearts and empty purses sit,
To take your dear fiveshillings' worth of wit."

For admission behind the scenes a charge appears to have been made, but I have been unable to find any statement as to the amount levied. Indeed, the point is so seldom mentioned by any writer that it might easily escape notice altogether. But in the report of the evidence brought against Lord Mohun at his trial for being accessory to the murder of Mountfort, the actor, in 1692, we find that John Rogers, a doorkeeper in the theatre, testified that he asked Mohun and his equally disreputable companion, Captain Hill, for money, "that they ought to pay more than the rest that were in the pit, because they came upon the stage." I am inclined to fancy, from the fact that Rogers mentions no particular sum, that perhaps there was no definite charge for admission to the stage, but that the amount was left to the generosity of the beaux and gallants. That the stage was sometimes used as a convenient means of passing from the pit to the boxes is shown by the epilogue to *The Man's the Master*, in which Davenant, describing the tricks of the theatre-goers, writes—

“Nay, often you swear, when places are shewn ye,
That your hearing is thick,
And so, by a love-trick,
You pass *through our scenes* up to the balcony.”

But everybody did not pay for admission. Leaving for the present those who dishonestly obtained entrance for nothing, we find that the noble army of “dead-heads,” to use the expressive modern word, existed two hundred years ago in great strength. All authors who had written plays, whether damned or otherwise, and all poets who had written prologue or epilogue, were on the free list; indeed, I am not sure that almost any poet who had printed his works had not a claim for free admission. In *A Satyr upon the Poets, being a Translation out of the 7th Satyr of Juvenal*, the following lines occur:—

“But on your Ruin stubbornly pursue,
Herd with the hungry little chiming Crew,
Obtain the empty Title of a Wit,
And be a free-cost Noisy in the Pit:
Print your dull Poems, and before 'em place
A Crown of Laurel, and a Meager Face.”

However irregular their conduct, the poets were at any rate recognized as entitled to free admission; but there was a considerable class who by force or fraud made their way into the playhouse without paying. To this nefarious practice one of the usages of the theatre specially lent itself. This was the regulation—an utterly absurd one, as it seems to us now—that any one who did not remain in the theatre till the end of the act then in progress did not require to pay anything. Our good friend Pepys again helps us to an example. He went to the two playhouses—“into the pit, to gaze up and down, and there did by this means, for nothing, see an act in

The Schoole of Compliments at the Duke of York's house, and *Henry the Fourth* at the King's house; but, not liking either of the plays, I took my coach again, and home." In the ballad-epilogue to *The Man's the Master*, just quoted, there is a verse referring to this practice—

"And some—a deuce take 'em!—pretend
They come but to speak with a friend;
Then wickedly rob us of a whole play
By stealing five times an act in a day.
O little England! speak, is it no pity,
That gallants ev'n here, and in thy chief city,
Should under great perruques have heads so small,
As they must steal wit, or have none at all?"

The way in which such a foolish practice would be abused is obvious enough. The dishonest playgoer would swagger, probably with his hand on his sword, past the doorkeepers, declaring that he was only going in for a few minutes, and would certainly come out before the end of an act. Then he would take his seat and keep it till the end of the play. To him the doorkeeper* would come, importuning him to pay his money, and a noisy altercation would promptly ensue, to the disturbance of the audience and the detriment of the play. So objectionable did this nuisance become, that a special decree was issued in 1665 against it, commanding that every one should pay on entering, but allowing the money to be returned if the playgoer left by the same entrance before the end of one act. Some ten years later the king issued another order, withdrawing the latter privilege. He commanded "that the money which shall be paid so by any persons in their respective places shall not be

* There were two doorkeepers at each entrance. To the first of these you paid your money, and from him received a ticket, which you gave up to the second doorkeeper.

returned again, after it is once paid, notwithstanding that such persons shall go out at any time before or during the play."

But, like all royal proclamations on theatrical subjects at this time, these decrees seem to have been quite as much "honoured in the breach as the observance;" for Pepys's last narrated proceedings took place on January 7, 1668, within three years of the issue of the 1665 edict, and seem to have been accepted as quite regular and unobjectionable. But an even more curious usage than this is revealed to us by an order which may be found among the records of the Lord Chamberlain's office, under date of December 7, 1663: "Whereas we are informed that diverse persons doe rudely presse and with evill language and blowes force their ways into the two theatres without paying the prices established;" therefore the king declares such proceedings unlawful, "notwithstanding their pretended priviledge by custom of forcing their entrance at the fourth or fifth acts without payment."

This particular method of swindling, being peculiar to the Restoration theatre, is of interest to us. But I must also mention a form of dishonesty which, like Shakespeare, is "for all time"—that is, the giving of bad money. This is brought specially under notice in the epilogue last mentioned, two lines of which are—

"You visit our plays, and merit the stocks
For paying half-crowns of brass to our box."

A curious usage in connection with paying, or rather with inability to pay, is mentioned by Pepys on December 30, 1667. After dining with Sir George Carteret at his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Pepys went to the King's Playhouse with Philip, Sir George's eldest son. Sir Philip (so he calls him) was anxious to stand treat to

Mr. Pepys: as the diarist puts it, "I could not but observe that Sir Philip Carteret would fain have given me my going into a play." But Mr. Pepys would not hear of such a thing. As it happened, Sir Philip had not money enough to pay for himself, but went in notwithstanding; from which Mr. Pepys learned that he was known there, and "did run upon the score for plays." "This," adds the diarist, "is a shame; but I perceive always he is in want of money." It will be noticed that, though Pepys expresses regret at the proceeding, he shows no surprise, and we thus gather that it was by no means an uncommon practice. This view is confirmed by a passage in the fourth act of Shadwell's *True Widow*, which was produced in 1679. The scene is laid in the pit of the playhouse, and several men come in without paying.

1st Doorkeeper. Pray, Sir, pay me; my Masters will make me pay it.

3rd Man. Impudent Rascal! do you ask me for money? Take that, Sirrah!

2nd Doorkeeper. Will you pay me, Sir?

4th Man. No; I don't intend to stay.

2nd Doorkeeper. So you say every day, and see two or three Acts for nothing.

4th Man. I'll break your Head, you Rascal!

1st Doorkeeper. Pray, Sir, pay me.

3rd Man. Set it down; I have no Silver about me; or bid my man pay you.

Theodosia. What! do Gentlemen run on Tick for Plays?

Carlos. As familiarly as with their Taylors."

Suppose, then, that we have paid our half-crown at the door, or even that we are known to the doorkeeper, and have got in on credit; we find ourselves in the pit, which, it is scarcely necessary to mention, occupies the

entire floor of the house. It is seated with benches, which are covered with matting. Dryden says—

“Who, to save coach-hire, trudge along the street,
Then print our matted seats with dirty feet.”

There are no backs to the benches, I am afraid, for we find numerous allusions to the fops standing on the seats of the pit, and walking over them.

“And so the hot Burgundian on the side,
Ply vizard-mask, and o’er the benches stride.”

And in Wycherley’s *Gentleman Dancing-Master* Hippolita says to Gerrard, “This is one of your confident tricks . . . you’ll be acquainted with a woman in the time you can help her over a bench in the playhouse”—which proceeding would be practically impossible if the benches had backs.

In front of the pit, in fact just as it is now, was the orchestra. In earlier times the music occupied a gallery, and the change seems to have been made when the New Theatre Royal in Drury Lane was built for Killigrew. Pepys visited it on the day after its opening (May 8, 1663) and found that “the musique being below, and most of it sounding under the very stage, there is no hearing of the bases at all, nor very well of the trebles, which sure must be mended.” What the orchestra consisted of I do not know, but, if we believe Tom Killigrew, the musical part of theatrical entertainments was distinctly primitive. He recited to Pepys the improvements he had wrought in stage matters; among other things he had increased the number of fiddlers from two or three to nine or ten of the best. But notwithstanding this, the quality of the music purveyed was something of the simplest. Killigrew, who seems to have been an excellent judge of music, complained that his efforts to

introduce good music, both in the reign of Charles I. and that of his successor, had been unavailing. In 1667, the time when Killigrew spoke, we had got no further than ballads. He says, “‘Hermit poore’ and ‘Chiny Chese’ [‘Chevy Chase’] was all the musique we had; and yet no ordinary fiddlers get so much money as our’s do here, which speaks our rudeness still.” In fact, we had more money than taste: we paid high salaries to the musicians, but did not care to hear them play good music.

From the orchestra to the stage is but a step, and here we find the greatest difference between the Restoration theatre and that of to-day. Even in our own time we have seen the final step taken which has changed the stage from literally a stage, or platform, into a flat picture of which nothing comes in front of the proscenium. The stage of the present Haymarket Theatre represents the furthest possible development of this idea, the heavy gilded proscenium being actually a picture-frame, which the curtain when it is down completely fills. But in the Restoration theatre the curtain was a long way back from the front edge of the stage. In other words, the stage projected or ran out into the auditorium; and that to such a considerable distance that a number of the audience in the pit were accommodated in the space on either side of it, the spectators being thus on three sides instead of on one. Cibber gives a very interesting account of the stage in front of the curtain as it existed before the time when Rich, in order to get more room for his pit, altered the structure of Drury Lane. He says—

“It must be observ’d, then, that the Area or Platform of the old Stage projected about four Foot forwarder, in a Semi-oval Figure, parallel to the Benches of the Pit; and that the former lower Doors of Entrance for the Actors were

brought down between the two foremost (and then only) Pilasters ; in the Place of which Doors now the two Stage-Boxes are fixt. That where the Doors of Entrance now are, there formerly stood two additional Side-Wings, in front to a full Set of Scenes, which had then almost a double Effect in their Loftiness and Magnificence.

“By this Original Form, the usual Station of the Actors, in almost every Scene, was advanc’d at least ten Foot nearer to the Audience than they now can be ; because, not only from the Stage’s being shorten’d in front, but likewise from the additional Interposition of those Stage-Boxes, the Actors (in respect to the Spectators that fill them) are kept so much more backward from the main Audience than they us’d to be : But when the Actors were in Possession of that forwarder Space to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the House, so that the most distant Ear had scarce the least Doubt or Difficulty in hearing what fell from the weakest Utterance : All Objects were thus drawn nearer to the Sense ; every painted Scene was stronger ; every grand Scene and Dance more extended ; every rich or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Lustre : Nor was the minutest Motion of a Feature (properly changing with the Passion or Humour it suited) ever lost, as they frequently must be in the Obscurity of too great a Distance.”

In treating of the stage behind the curtain I shall have occasion to discuss the “doors of entrance.” Dealing now only with the appearance of the house in front, we will rest content with the general impression conveyed by Cibber’s description—namely, that the actors played principally on a platform which brought them so well forward into the theatre that they were frequently level with the audience occupying the two corners of the pit.

Satisfied with this general impression of the stage as seen from the pit, let us return to the consideration of the audience in front. For the upper gallery the poets had little but abuse and sarcasm. To the ordinary

frequenters of that part who paid down their modest shilling they seldom allude. The upper gallery only comes into notice in connection with the footmen, who had under varying conditions gratis admission to it. In his Epilogue on the Union of the two Companies in 1682, Dryden complains of the rude and boisterous behaviour of the footmen.

“Then for your lacqueys, and your train beside,
By whate’er name or title dignified,
They roar so loud, you’d think behind the stairs
Tom Dove, and all the brotherhood of bears :
They’ve grown a nuisance, beyond all disasters ;
We’ve none so great but—their unpaying masters.”

From the words, “behind the stairs,” I am inclined to fancy that Dryden alludes to the noise which the servants made before they were admitted into their gallery, which at this time was not until the end of the fourth act. While hanging about the entrances and lobbies their noise might be quite audible in the theatre.

When, in 1701, Farquhar, in the prologue to *Sir Harry Wildair*, alludes to the footmen, their privileges had been enlarged, as will be related in its due place, and they were admitted to their gallery at the beginning of the performance. Farquhar declares that he learns his lesson in play-writing by studying his audience.

“First, from you beaus, his lesson is formality ;
And in your footmen there—most nice morality ;
To pleasure them his Pegasus must fly,
Because they judge—and lodge—three stories high.”

The middle gallery, or eighteenpenny place, had the unenviable distinction of being that part of the theatre principally affected by, if not set aside for, women of the town. In the early years of the Restoration its reputation may not have been quite so bad, but by 1682 it had

quite lost character. In Dryden's Epilogue on the Union, which I have already quoted, the lines occur—

“ But stay ; methinks some vizard-mask I see,
Cast out her lure from the mid gallery :
About her all the fluttering sparks are ranged ;
The noise continues, though the scene is changed :
Now growling, sputtering, wailing, such a clutter !
'Tis just like puss defendant in a gutter.”

It will be seen that “vizard mask” is here used as a synonym for a woman of loose character. Originally the mask was a sign of modesty, real or affected, and, according to Cibber, was worn by ladies for the supposed purpose of concealing their blushes at loose passages in plays. This custom seems to have been revived in 1663, for Pepys notes, on June 12 of that year, that the Lady Mary Cromwell, being at the theatre, put on her vizard when the house began to fill, and kept it on through the whole play. This, Pepys remarks, “has of late become a great fashion among the ladies, which hides their whole face.” After the play Mrs. Pepys promptly carried off her husband to the Exchange, and made him buy her a mask, her wearing of which is afterwards recorded in the *Diary* as late as 1667. By this time I fancy that vizard-masks were being given up by ladies, because, owing to their convenience for intrigues, they were so largely adopted by women of the town. I mean, of course, in theatres, for they were in common use out of doors long after this. In the prologue to the second part of *The Conquest of Granada*, produced in 1670, Dryden alludes to the vizard-masks in terms which seem to show that a vizard was even then a mark of bad character—

“ But, as when vizard-mask appears in pit,
Straight every man, who thinks himself a wit,

Perks up, and, managing his comb with grace,
 With his white wig sets off his nut-brown face ;
 That done, bears up to the prize, and views each limb,
 To know her by her rigging and her trim ;
 Then, the whole noise of fops to wagers go,—
 ‘Pox on her, ’t must be she ;’ and—‘damme, no !’”

In 1694 the epilogue to Congreve’s *Double Dealer* makes the distinction very clearly. It says—

“The Vizor-Masks, that are in Pit and Gallery,
 Approve, or Damn the Repartee and Rallery.
 The Lady Criticks, who are better Read,
 Enquire if Characters are nicely bred ;
 If the soft things are Penn’d and spoke with grace :
 They judge of Action too, and Time, and Place.”

But at whatever time this gallery was given up to base uses, it is certain that it was never frequented by the quality. In *The Country Wife* (1673) Pinchwife, for the express purpose of concealing Margery from the sparks whom he fears, takes her into the middle gallery.

“*Horner*. . . . I saw you yesterday in the eighteenpenny place with a pretty country-wench.

Pinchwife. How the devil ! did he see my wife then ? I sat there that she might not be seen. But she shall never go to a play again. [Aside.

Horner. What ! dost thou blush, at nine-and-forty, for having been seen with a wench ?

Dorilant. No, faith, I warrant ’twas his wife, which he seated there out of sight.”

Mrs. Pinchwife, the verdant country wife, complains of the class of neighbours she had in the middle gallery. She says, “We sat amongst ugly people. He [Pinchwife] would not let me come near the gentry, who sat under us, so that I could not see ’em. He told me, none but naughty women sat there. . . . But I would have ventured, for all that.”

Probably it was to this gallery that Dapperwit, in the same play, took Lucy, whom he asks, when they quarrel, if she will never more sit in his lap at a new play. Such a proceeding would be quite in keeping with the character of the place as given by Dryden, who in another prologue from that already quoted says, ". . . Some there are who take their first degrees Of lewdness in our middle galleries." In the prologue to *The Island Princess* (1699) we find an allusion to similar goings-on—

"Ye gallery-haunters, who love to lie snug,
And munch apples or cakes while some neighbour you hug."

Under the middle gallery, where the dress circle or balcony is in a modern theatre, were the boxes. To these the poets were always markedly polite, for their occupants were the beauties and toasts of the town. The speaker of the epilogue to Corye's *Generous Enemies*, already quoted, spoke the line, "Though there I see—Propitious Angels sit," pointing at the boxes; and in the "tag" to Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours*, Camilla's lines, commencing, "You *Ladies*, whilst unmarried," are to be spoken "addressing to the Boxes." Of course the boxes were not the exclusive resort of ladies, for, as we shall see, Pepys chronicles their presence in the pit on several occasions.

The box of the Restoration theatre did not resemble our modern private box, in being taken by one party whose sole property it was for the day. It was rather like the boxes on some of the tiers of the Paris Grand Opéra, or, to give a humbler illustration, the stage-boxes of the Britannia Theatre, where, for eighteenpence, you may have your single seat, among a miscellaneous company. Of course, the king had his box when he visited the theatre; but when his Majesty was not present

even the royal box was let off in separate seats, for I know more than one allusion to the front row of the king's box as being a specially conspicuous and coveted position. Thus, in the well-known anecdote of the commencement of Wycherley's intrigue with Charles's mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland, the lady meets the gentleman at the theatre by appointment, and, says Dennis—"She was that Night in the first Row of the King's Box in Drury Lane, and Mr. Wycherley in the Pit under her, where he entertain'd her during the whole Play." If this passage stood alone, we should be apt to conclude that the Duchess of Cleveland sat in the king's box by virtue of her dishonourable connection with Charles, but other quotations will show that this would be a wrong conclusion. In Tom Brown's *Letters from the Dead to the Living*, Julian, late Secretary to the Muses, writing to Will Pierre [Peer] of Lincoln's Inn Fields Playhouse—his letter is dated "*Pandæmonium, the 8th of the month of Belzebub*"—recalls how in the lampoons of which he had been the channel while living—"the antiquated Coquet was told of her age and ugliness, tho' her vanity plac'd her in the first row in the king's box at the playhouse;" and in Etheredge's *Sir Fopling Flutter*, Dorimant talks of "some awkward, ill-fashioned, country toad, who, not having above four dozen of black hairs on her head, has adorned her baldness with a large white fruz, that she may look sparkishly in the forefront of the king's box at an old play."

From Pepys, too, we learn that the arrangement in the boxes was as I have stated. On his first visit to that sphere (October 19, 1667), which he proudly chronicles, he adds, "And in the same box came by-and-by, my Lord Barkeley and his lady; but I did not turn my face to them to be known, so that I was excused from giving

them my seat." Thus we establish beyond question the letting of the seats in the boxes to separate persons.

One other point may be alluded to—the height of the circle of boxes above the pit. This must have been very inconsiderable, for the beaux in the pit seem to have been able to talk to the ladies in the boxes without any difficulty—as, for instance, Wycherley to the Duchess of Cleveland, in the story I have just quoted. In all probability the boxes bore the same relation to the pit that the balcony of the present Haymarket Theatre does to the stalls. This theory is borne out by a passage in one of Congreve's letters, where, in relating the arrangements on a specially fashionable day at Dorset Garden Theatre, he writes, "The boxes and pit were all thrown into one, so that all sat in common; and the whole was crammed with beauties and beaux."

When we come to the occupants of the pit, we are rather embarrassed by the quantity of allusions to them in contemporary authors. Remonstrance, satire, abuse, are so freely showered upon them by angry or nervous dramatists, that we are able to construct a tolerably elaborate picture of that part of the house. First, let us dispose of the most solid and perhaps least interesting of its occupants—those prosaic people who came to see the play. They seem to have affected the centre of the pit. Dryden says—

"Here's good accommodation in the pit;
The grave demurely in the midst may sit."

But nobody cared for these dull attentive auditors; the pittites in whom the poets took an interest were the fops and the critics—or perhaps I ought to say the fops who were the critics. As there were no newspapers in which to advertise the performances, so there were no

periodical channels by which criticism could be communicated to the public. It is a curious proof of the smallness of London and of the playgoing public, that the success or failure of a play could be made in a day by the mere report of those who had seen it. How these self-constituted critics conducted themselves during the progress of the play they were engaged in judging shall be our first inquiry; and as our first witness we will call a famous wit, no less a person than Sir Charles Sedley. The play is *The Maid's Tragedy*, and on February 18, 1667, it is being played at the King's House. Mr. Pepys, who has seen a portion of it two months before, has been so pleased that he has come on this occasion to see the whole play; but, unfortunately, he has taken his seat near Sir Charles Sedley and two ladies with whom the wit has fallen into conversation. One of the fair damsels wears her mask, and rejects all Sir Charles's entreaties to reveal her identity to him. Yet she shows by many pleasant hints that he is well known to her, and excites his curiosity to the utmost. An encounter of wits goes on during the entire progress of the play, and at the end Mr. Pepys has to confess that, while the wit-combat has given him the keenest pleasure, he has not heard a word of the dialogue on the stage. And Mr. Pepys's experience must have been that of all the neighbours of the beau and the lady, but they apparently made no protest, and did not think the proceedings in any way objectionable. A gentleman who wished to talk was quite entitled to prevent his neighbours hearing the play, even though on the stage were two of the most famous actors in the world, Charles Hart and Michael Mohun, in their great characters of Amintor and Melantius.

And such an excuse as Sir Charles Sedley had was

not required to allow talk and noise. In fact, talk and noise seem to have been the recognized business of the fop at the play.

“There are a sort of prattlers in the pit,
Who either have, or who pretend to, wit ;
These noisy sirs so loud their parts rehearse,
That oft the play is silenced by the farce.”

So Dryden writes, in his Epilogue on the Union ; and in his prologue to the opera of *The Prophetess* he gives some idea of the class of conversation indulged in. He is condoling with the ladies on the absence of their gallants, who are away, taking part in the campaign in Ireland—

“With your propitious presence grace our play,
And with a sigh their empty seats survey ;
Then think,—on that bare bench my servant sat !
I see him ogle still, and hear him chat ;
Selling facetious bargains, and propounding
That witty recreation, called dumfounding.”

“Dumfounding” was simply a rude and silly style of hoaxing ; but “selling bargains” was an indecent amusement, the point of which lay in getting your interlocutor to ask a question, and answering it by a reference too gross to be particularized. To such talkers Dryden no doubt alluded when he wrote—

“And when a lot of smilers lent an ear
To one that talked, I knew the foe was there.
The club of jests went round : he, who had none,
Borrow’d o’ the next, and told it for his own.”

And “selling bargains” is pointedly mentioned in the prologue to Lee’s *Rival Queens*—

“As for you, sparks, that hither come each day
To act your own and not to mind our play,

Rehearse your usual follies to the pit,
And with loud nonsense crown the stage's wit ;
Talk of your clothes, your last debauches tell,
And witty bargains to each other sell."

The head-quarters of the disturbance was that portion of the pit which the poets nicknamed "Fops' Corner," which was, no doubt, one of the corners nearest the stage, for we find various allusions to the critic-fops, in feather and huge white periwig, sitting on the foremost benches of the pit. But these fine gentlemen did not always confine themselves to humour and noise, and sometimes a real tragedy made the mimic scene lose its interest. For instance, that learned writer, Gerard Langbaine, who was so assiduous a tracker of the plagiarism of contemporary dramatists, records how in the pit of the Dorset Garden Theatre he saw Mr. Scroop receive his death-wound from the sword of Sir Thomas Armstrong, what time the tragedy of *Macbeth* was being acted on the stage. Dryden, too, in his prologue to *The Spanish Friar*, alludes to quarrels in the pit as of frequent occurrence.

Tom Brown divided wits and beaux into three classes : first, beaux, but not wits, "and these are easy to be known by their full periwigs and empty skulls ;" second, wits that are not beaux, who, "not to talk of their outsides, are distinguish'd by censuring the ill taste of the age, and railing at one another ;" and third, those who were both wits and beaux. Our critics have so far been of this last order, but the first class mentioned was also powerfully represented in the playhouse. Lord Flippant, who has been already quoted, will serve as a type of these.

"Come, *Dick*, says I . . . d—me, let's to the play : r—t me, says he, 'tis a dull one : d—me, says I, I value not the play, my province lies in the boxes, ogling my half-crown

away, or running from side-box to side-box, to the inviting *incognitas* in black faces, or else wittily to cry out aloud in the pit, &c., *Bough*, or *Boyla*, and then be prettily answer'd by the rest of the Wits in the same note, like musical instruments tuned to the same pitch."

Such, too, were the gallants who, as described in *She Would if She Could*, run "from one playhouse to the other playhouse, and, if they like neither the play nor the women, seldom stay any longer than the combing of their periwigs or a whisper or two with a friend; and then they cock their caps and out they strut again."

One other point regarding the pit may be alluded to—the social condition of its occupants. This was certainly very miscellaneous. We have seen how ladies of condition and women of the town frequented it. We have seen also that Pepys saw ordinary 'prentices and mean people in the same pit where, on another occasion, he sat next Sir Charles Sedley. But even higher folks than the witty baronet were found there. On the first day of Etheredge's *She Would if She Could* (February 6, 1668), the Duke of Buckingham sat openly in the pit, in company with Lord Buckhurst, Sedley, and Wycherley. Fine ladies, too, in the earlier years of Charles II.'s reign, were constant frequenters of the pit. On January 31, 1661, Pepys "sat in the pitt among the company of fine ladys, etc.;" but I think that class of auditor gradually found this part of the house too rough for them, though it would be a mistake to attribute too great delicacy to these fine ladies. Witness this little incident, which I quote from Pepys without comment, "To the Theatre . . . and here I sitting behind in a dark place, a lady spit backward upon me by a mistake, not seeing me; but after seeing her to be a very pretty lady, I was not troubled at it at all."

Having described the critics, we can proceed to consider the mode of criticism. First, then, the "cursèd critics," the "good savage gentlemen," as poets addressed them, criticized the play freely as it progressed. Dryden says of one of them—

"For he (he vows) at no friend's play can sit,
But he must needs find fault, to show his wit."

And, of course, the criticism was spoken loudly, with the purpose of attracting attention. When the play was ended the wits remained to talk it over. They were good leisurely times, those of the second Charles; there was no hurrying away as soon as the curtain fell; no managers were expected to clear their theatres of the audience in three minutes. In fact, the people seem to have been allowed to remain as long as they pleased; for Pepy relates how on a wet afternoon he and many others stayed in the pit an hour and a half, waiting till the rain ceased.

It is to Dryden, whose prologues and epilogues are perfect storehouses of information regarding the habits of the playgoers of his time, that we owe the knowledge of the late sitting of the critics. The epilogue to *Sir Martin Mar-all* commences—

"As country vicars, when the sermon's done,
Run huddling to the benediction;
Well knowing, though the better sort may stay,
The vulgar rout will run unblest away:
So we, when once our play is done, make haste
With a short epilogue to close your taste.
In thus withdrawing, we seem mannerly;
But, when the curtain's down, we peep, and see
A jury of the wits, who still stay late,
And in their club decree the poor play's fate;
Their verdict back is to the boxes brought,
Thence all the town pronounces it their thought."

Having seen the audience fairly seated, and whiling away the tedious hours by the aid of talk and jest, the purchase of oranges, and banter, which we may be assured was none too delicate, with the orange-women who infested the pit, we will use the privilege of the beaux and men about town, and wander behind the scenes ere the curtain rises. Of course, the stage was no longer a recognized camping-ground for the gallants, as it was in earlier times; and from the circumstance that Pepys, so far as I know, makes no allusion to company on the stage, we may conclude that the practice of beaux exhibiting themselves to the audience during the play was not revived after the Restoration.* Pepys certainly went behind the scenes, but he went as the friend of Mrs. Knipp, and he assuredly did not show himself to the audience. Dryden, too, who may be supposed to miss no usage of the theatre, so full are his works of allusions to them, has very little mention of the beaux who exhibited their persons and clothes on the stage. Dryden's beaux run from box to box, they loll on the foremost benches of the pit, they fill Fop-Corner full of noise and rattle, but they keep in the front of the house. Even Tom Brown's Lord Flippant, the typical fop whom I have quoted, says nothing of showing himself off on the stage. I think, however, that between the acts of the play a certain amount of promenading on the stage went on. It is difficult otherwise to understand the following lines, which occur in the epilogue to which I have already referred—that to *The Man's the Master*:—

* Up to comparatively modern times performers were allowed on benefit nights to accommodate people on the stage; but this practice had no affinity to the old usage of camping on the stage.

"Others are bolder, and never cry, shall I?
 For they make our guards quail,
 ' And 'twixt curtain and rail,
 Oft combing their hair, they walk in Fop-Alley."

This term, "Fop-Alley," or "Fops' Alley," continued to be applied to a certain portion of the Italian Opera House (Her Majesty's Theatre) until comparatively recently. In the theatre as it is at present arranged, "Fops' Alley" was the space between the orchestra and the first row of stalls, in which the exquisites were accustomed to stand, during the *entr'actes*, ogling the fair occupants of the boxes. In earlier times, while yet the pit occupied the entire floor, the passage which ran down the centre of the house from the back wall to the orchestra bore this name. But in the Restoration theatre "Fops' Alley" was surely on the stage. Witness the expression, "'twixt curtain and rail;" witness also Jo. Haines's epilogue "spoken on an ass," which mentions "a beau-crowded stage."

Having made our way to the stage, our steps, in the Restoration theatre, would probably turn first to the "tiring-room" (as yet there were no separate dressing-rooms for particular performers), where we should see Mrs. Ellen Gwynne and her fair companions in various states of unreadiness. They are in no way disturbed at our entrance, but proceed with their toilet with perfect nonchalance. We are not surprised at our favourable reception, for the epilogue to *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* had even invited citizens behind the scenes—

"Into the pit already you are come,
 'Tis but a step more to our tiring room;
 Where none of us but will be wondrous sweet
 Upon an able love of Lombard Street."

After paying a few quite frank compliments to the

personal perfections of the fair actresses, we next betake ourselves to the green-room, or, as it was then generally called, the "Scene-room," where we meet the gentlemen of the company as well as the ladies. Here we sit down, and if we are as intimate with any of the actresses as Mr. Pepys was with Mrs. Knipp, we may hear her part in that day's play, we giving her the "cues," and she repeating her lines, or, as Pepys puts it, we "reading the questions," while she answers. Let us hope that it will not be our fate on this occasion to hear Mrs. Gwynne curse because there is a bad house, as was once Mr. Pepys's experience.

Now we wander a step further, and come to the actual stage. We must suppose our visit to be paid not earlier than 1661, and we accordingly find scenery set much as it is now. The days are gone when "coarse hangings then instead of scenes were worn," and the stage-play now vies with the court masque in the magnificence of its adornment. In the stage are traps, but this is no new fashion, for the Shakespearian theatre knew these contrivances well. In the theatre we are now visiting, the traps must have been both large and numerous to allow the effects to be produced which were necessary in every spectacular production. Such a direction as the following necessitates a very large trap door for its carrying out :—

"The Cave of *Proteus* rises out of the Sea, it consists of several Arches of Rock-work, adorn'd with Mother of Pearl, Coral, and abundance of Shells of various kinds : Through the Arches is seen the Sea, and parts of *Dover Peer* : In the middle of the Cave is *Proteus* asleep on a Rock adorn'd with Shells, *etc.*, like the Cave."

Whether the stage was honeycombed with traps as the stage of to-day is, in which only the main beams, or "fillets," as they are technically called, are immovable,

I do not know; but in the ninety-ninth *Tailler*, relating Rich's evacuation of Drury Lane, it is said that he "left to the enemy nothing but an empty stage, full of trap-doors, known only to himself and his adherents."

Such stage-directions as that which I have just quoted were the outcome of the elaborate mechanism which had been used in Masques by Inigo Jones and other artists, and which had been constructed at a vast expenditure of money. They were employed on the regular stage only in such productions as Operas; the setting of the legitimate drama being of necessity not too elaborate. I say of necessity, because the changes of scene in regular plays were frequent, and must have been instantaneous. Some plan such as we are all familiar with—that is either a "cloth" or a "pair of flats"—must have been the common method of changing the scene. Take, for instance, the fourth act of *The Indian Emperor*. The first scene of the act, which no doubt occupied the whole stage, is "A Prison," in which Cortez is "discovered," to use the technical phrase, chained and laid asleep. At the conclusion of the scene he "goes in, and the Scene closes upon him." This must have been a "carpenter's scene," again to use a technicality, and probably it was set just within the proscenium. It represented "A Chamber Royal." The stage was cleared at its conclusion, and scene the third was "A Pleasant Grotto discover'd." This means, of course, that the "carpenter's scene" was taken off and the grotto shown, set half-way up the stage. The fourth and last scene of the act returns to the prison-scene which opened it—the "grotto" being cleared away and revealing the prison, which must have been set at the very back of the stage. We thus see that the scene-plot of this tragedy was comparatively simple, and we may take it as a fair type

of its class. That such changes were made instantaneously, or as quickly as stage carpenters could work the scenes, is shown by the curious fact that we find cases in which the characters remain on the stage while the scene is changing, and go on with the dialogue in the new situation. Thus in *The Rival Ladies*, the scene of the last act is laid on board a ship, and the Captain and another seaman are discovered on deck. The Captain, after some conversation, remarks, "Don *Rod'rick's* door opens, I'll speak to him," and the stage-direction is, "The scene draws and discovers the Captain's cabin; Rodorick on a bed, and two servants by him." The Captain then proceeds with his speech, "How is it with the brave Don *Rodorick?*" as if nothing had happened.

This illustration has been taken from a comedy, but I might have chosen a tragedy with equal effect. A very interesting succession of scenes may be found, for instance, in the fifth act of Dryden and Lee's *Duke of Guise*. The first scene is "The Castle of Bloise," whither come the Guise's enemy, Grillon, and Alphonso Corso. The King and the heroine, Marmoutier, next occupy the stage, and the Deputies of the three States of the Realm interview the King. After a long scene, the King and Grillon are left on the stage; they "exeunt severally;" and "the scene opens, and discovers men and women at a Banquet, *Malicorne* standing by." Malicorne, an unfortunate rascal who has sold his soul to the devil, soliloquizes on his bargain, and, feeling somewhat depressed, calls for a song. A duet and chorus, and a dance, are performed by the company; then comes a loud knocking at the door; and a servant enters to announce a stranger who will not be denied admittance. "Bid him enter, and go off thyself," says Malicorne—"exit Servant. Scene closes upon the company. Enter

Melanax, an Hour-glass in his hand almost empty"—and *Malicorne* continues his speech, addressing *Melanax*, who is a demon: "How dar'st thou interrupt my softer hours?" All this is very quaint stage-management, the banquet episode being curious enough in itself, but still more curious as introducing *Malicorne* into the principal scene, on which he proceeds to die, or at least to be carried downwards through a trap-door, *à la* *Giovanni*. Then the stage is occupied by *Guise*, *Marmoutier*, and others, and at the end I should say that the scene closed on *Guise solus* spouting—

"No more, blue Fires, and ye dull rowling Lakes,
Fathomless Caves, ye Dungeons of old Night,
Fantom, be gone ! if I must die, I'll fall
True Politician, and defie you all."

Scene II.—for the episode of the banquet is not reckoned a scene—is "The Court before the Council-Hall," which was no doubt a "front" or "carpenter's" scene. A few short speeches are spoken, giving time for the rearrangement of the scenery behind, and the stage is cleared to disclose Scene III., "Council-Hall," set, we may assume, a little further back than Scene II. This is also a very brief scene. The Duke of *Guise*, who is on the stage with others of the conspirators against the King, is commanded to go into his Majesty's presence. He obeys, and after he leaves the stage, his friends, the Cardinal of *Guise* and the Archbishop of Lyons, express their fear that the Duke will be assassinated by the King's orders. The scene then proceeds thus—

"*Guise (within)*. Murderers, Villains !
Archbishop. I hear your Brother's voice, run to the door.
Cardinal. Help, help ! the *Guise* is murder'd.
Arch. Help, help !

Grillon. Cease your vain Crys ; you are the *King's* Prisoners.

Take 'em, *Dugast*, into your Custody.

Card. We must obey, my Lord, for Heaven calls us.

[*Exeunt.*

The Scene draws, behind it a Traverse.

[*The GUISE is assaulted by Eight ; they stab him in all Parts, but most in the Head.*

Guise. O Villains ! Hell Hounds ! Hold :

[*Half draws his Sword, is held.*

Murder'd, O basely, and not draw my Sword.

Dog, *Logniac*, but my own Blood choaks me :

[*Flings himself upon him.*

Down, Villain, Down ! I'm gone, O *Marmoutier.* [*Dies.*

The Traverse is drawn.

[*The KING rises from his Chair, comes forward with his Cabinet Council.*

King. Open the Closet, and let in the Council ;

Bid *Dugast* execute the Cardinal,

Seize all the Faction's Leaders, as I order'd,

And every one be answer'd on your Lives."

Picture the scene after the exit of the Duke of Guise. The characters on the stage hear the cries of the Duke, literally behind the scene, for he and his murderers are, of course, waiting on the stage ready to strike the necessary attitudes in a moment or two. The characters hurry off, and the scene is quickly drawn, revealing the Guise struggling with the assassins. He no doubt fights forward, and dies effectively far down the stage. At the back is a "Traverse," that is, a pair of curtains running on a rod ; and behind these the King and his Cabinet Council sit waiting till their presence is revealed to the audience by the drawing of the "Traverse." Then the curtains are run apart, and the King is in the same scene with the dead body of the Guise. Why a "Traverse" should be used instead of a regular scene,

is no doubt owing to the exigencies of the stage. It is quite conceivable that all the "grooves" in which the scenes ran were used already; Scene II. occupying the first grooves, Scene III. the second, and the Council Chamber in which the King and his Council were discovered being set in the uppermost grooves.

I have entered at some length into the consideration of the arrangements in this play, because the stage-directions are so explicit as to enable us to form a tolerably clear idea of how the scenery of a regular play was managed in the Restoration theatre. In the case of irregular plays or spectacles, which were popularly designated operas, the scenic arrangements were much more elaborate than in the legitimate drama. Indeed, it is difficult for us to realize their magnificence, and we must go to the most gorgeous of pantomime transformation scenes nowadays to find any parallel to the scenery which adorned such pieces as *Psyche*, *Circe*, *Albion and Albanus*, every scene of which was elaborately built and set, and changed time after time by means of the stage-traps or by the "machines" and other devices which the scene-painter uses now to produce the various stages of a huge transformation scene. We will take *Albion and Albanus* as a specimen opera, not only because it is by Dryden, the greatest writer of this class of work, but also because it has a special interest for us, inasmuch as the scenes and decorations were invented and arranged by Betterton, whose very words describing them we are able to quote.

In *Albion and Albanus*, not only was the scenery new; a new frame was made for the pictures. Immediately inside the proscenium a new "Frontispiece" was built, being an elaborate arch and columns, on which were designed allegorical figures, some of which were "bigger than the Life." When the curtain rose this frontispiece

was discovered ; alongside of each of the front columns stood an equestrian statue of gold on a marble pedestal ; and beyond was "a Street of Palaces, which lead to the Front of the Royal Exchange." The chief spectacular effect of this scene is thus described, "The Clouds divide, and Juno appears in a Machine drawn by Peacocks ; while a Symphony is playing, it moves gently forward, and as it descends it opens and discovers the Tail of the Peacock, which is so large, that it almost fills the opening of the Stage between Scene and Scene." That is to say, it was nearly as large as the proscenium opening—truly a magnificent effect ! The next scene is "A Poetical Hell," with figures of Prometheus, Sisyphus, and other unfortunates. "Then a great Arch of Fire. Behind this three Pyramids of Flames in perpetual agitation. Beyond this, glowing Fire, which terminates the Prospect."

In the next act the cave of Proteus rises through the stage, as has already been described, and another "Machine" rises, which opens and shows Venus and Albanus sitting in a great scallop-shell, attended by Loves, Graces, and Heroes. The shell is drawn by dolphins, and moves forward till it lands Venus and Albanus on the stage, when it closes and sinks. The last scene has also a special interest for us, showing as it does that elaborate "set-pieces," row behind row, were used in these productions. With the recital of Betterton's description of the scene we may leave this part of our subject, sufficient having been quoted to show the lavish extent to which decoration was used on the Restoration stage. The scene was

"A Walk of very high trees : at the end of the Walk is a view of that part of Windsor which faces Eaton : in the midst of it is a row of small trees, which lead to the Castle-

Hill : In the first scene, part of the Town and part of the Hill : in the next the Terrace Walk, the King's Lodgings, and the upper part of St. George's Chapel, then the Keep ; and lastly, that part of the Castle beyond the Keep."

When a scene was set immediately behind the proscenium, as I have surmised was sometimes the case in regular drama, we naturally ask, "How did the actors get on the stage?" and this brings us to one of the strangest points of the old theatre—that is, strange in the sense of unfamiliar—the doors for entering and leaving the stage. No matter what the scene was—the deck of a ship, the interior of a prison, the heart of a forest—the principal method of entrance was by the doors in the proscenium. So clear are the stage-directions on this point that I need only quote one or two.¹ In Dryden's *King Arthur*, the scene of Act III. is "a deep wood," and at one point "*Exeunt ARTHUR and MERLIN at one door. Enter OSMOND at the other door.*" In Etheredge's *She Would if she Could*, the doors are of great service.¹ The second act opens in the Mulberry Garden, to which open-air resort the two young girls Ariana and Gatty go to meet their gallants. They walk nimbly over the stage, and Freeman and Courtal at once give chase. The men go off the stage pursuing the girls, and the scene then proceeds—

"*Enter Women again, and cross the stage.*

Ariana. Now if these should prove two men-of-war that are cruising here to watch for prizes.

Gatty. Would they had courage enough to set upon us ! I long to be engaged.

Aria. Look, look yonder, I protest, they chase us.

Gat. Let us bear away, then ; if they be truly valiant, they'll quickly make more sail and board us.

[*The Women go out, and go about behind the Scenes to the other door.*

Enter COURTAL and FREEMAN.

Free. 'Sdeath, how fleet they are ! whatsoever faults they have, they cannot be broken-winded.

Court. . . . We shall never reach them.

Free. I'll follow directly, do thou turn down the cross walk and meet 'em.

Enter the Women, and after them COURTAL at the lower door, and FREEMAN at the upper on the contrary side."

From this we learn that there were two doors of entrance on either side of the stage. If we refer to the passage, already quoted (p. 27), in which Cibber describes the alterations made on the Drury Lane stage by Rich, we see that both doors were at first in front of the curtain, and that, later, two stage-boxes were substituted for the lower doors. From the circumstance, mentioned by Cibber, that two side-wings formerly stood where in the altered stage the upper doors of entrance were placed, we must conclude that in the later form these entrances were behind the proscenium. This is confirmed by the passage in the two hundred and fortieth *Spectator*, which describes the conduct of a beau exhibiting himself on the stage. It runs—

“This was a very lusty Fellow, but withal a sort of Beau, who getting into one of the Side-boxes on the Stage before the Curtain drew, was disposed to shew the whole Audience his Activity by leaping over the Spikes ; he pass'd from thence to one of the entering Doors, where he took snuff with a tolerable good grace, display'd his fine cloaths, made one or two feint passes at the curtain with his cane, then faced about and appear'd at t'other door ; Here he affected to survey the whole house, bow'd and smil'd at random, and then shew'd his teeth, which were some of them indeed very white : After this he retired behind the curtain, and obliged us with several views of his person from every opening.”

There are several very interesting allusions in this passage, which refers to the very stage Cibber has described for us—that of Drury Lane. First we have the boxes on the stage, occupying the place of the old lower doors of entrance. On the front of the box there are spikes, uncomfortable ornaments, which are alluded to by Fielding in his farce of *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742); where Mrs. Tawdry, describing the behaviour of fine ladies at the play, says, "Why, if they can they take a stage-box, where they let the footman sit the first two acts to show his livery; then they come in to show themselves, spread their fans upon the spikes, make curtsies to their acquaintance, and then talk and laugh as loud as they are able."

Next we have the lower entrance doors, situated between the stage-box and the curtain; while the phrase, "faced about and appear'd at t'other door," confirms the theory that the upper doors of entrance were behind the curtain; for it is quite obvious that Steele had in his mind's eye only one door on either side. The curtain, too, is described, by implication, as a divided curtain which hung in two parts, and was drawn when it was opened. If it had been a curtain which rose, as curtains do now, the beau could not have shown himself "at every opening."

It must not, however, be supposed that the doors, though they were most commonly used, were the only entrances. Occasionally the characters entered or made their exit within the scene. In Dryden's *King Arthur* we have, "*Enter EMMELINE and MATILDA at the far end of the Wood;*" and in the same poet's *Rival Ladies*, Gonsalvo "*Goes farther off towards the end of the Stage*" a few moments before his exit. But, comparing the infrequency of such stage-directions with the continual references to the "doors," we must conclude that it was only in excep-

tional circumstances that any other entrances than the latter were used.

In old plays a frequent direction is that a character "appears above," or "looks over the Balcony." So common is this that I cannot help fancying that the Restoration theatre had some substitute for the balcony which, in the Shakespearian theatre, was the appointed location of all action that took place above the level of the stage—which served for Juliet's balcony, for the walls of Angiers, for the battlements of Rouen. Whether the balcony were fixed, or formed a portion of the movable scene, it is certain that it had a door beneath it. For instance, in *The Indian Emperor*, Cydaria is in a tower, and Montezuma "*Knocks at the door, at last CYDARIA looks over the Balcony,*" and a little later "*CYDARIA descends and opens the Door.*" It is extremely unlikely, considering the important action that frequently took place "above," that the situation of this balcony was anywhere except well forward. Indeed, we should gather this from the scene I have just quoted, for Almeria, desiring to conceal her presence from Cydaria, while Montezuma knocks at the door, "steps behind;" and, again, "*CORTEZ and Spaniards appear at the other end,*" which I take to mean up at the back of the scene. This being so, I would suggest that the balcony was the space over the doors of entrance, which in our own time presented the appearance of a stage-box, though it was never used as such. I think that some confirmation of this view is afforded by the famous scene in *Sir Martin Mar-All*, in which the foolish knight pretends to serenade his mistress, and is detected by reason of his stupidity in continuing to make the motion of playing his lute and singing long after the actual musician has ceased. The stage-directions are, "*Enter MILLICENT and ROSE, with a candle by 'em*

above," and "*Sir MARTIN appears at the adverse Window.*"

From the various peculiarities of the stage which we have been considering, it follows that most of the action took place on the projecting platform, or stage proper. How large this space was we may gather from Cibber's statement that by the change in the stage the actors' position was put backward ten feet from their former station, and yet sufficient room was left for proper action. It is scarcely necessary to prove so self-evident a proposition as that this space was not left vacant; but I may just point out that Cibber's already quoted remarks imply the fullest use of the front of the stage. He says, "When the Actors were in possession of that forwarder Space to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the House . . . Nor was the minutest Motion of a Feature . . . ever lost, as they frequently must be in the Obscurity of too great a Distance."

But it may be asked, "Did the actors die on this forward stage, and remain in sight of the audience after the curtains had been closed?" The answer is that they certainly did. Remember, for instance, the famous epilogue spoken by Nell Gwynne to Dryden's *Tyrannick Love*. Nell played a serious part, Valeria—she probably played it "most basely," as Mr. Pepys remarked upon another occasion—and in the last act she stabs herself twice, and dies, "sighing her soul into her lover's eyes." She lies dead on the stage; then, when the bearer comes to carry her off, she starts to her feet, exclaiming—

"Hold! are you mad? you damned confounded dog!
I am to rise, and speak the Epilogue."

The stage-direction is, "Epilogue. Spoken by *Mrs. Ellen*, when she was to be carried off dead by the

Bearers." One of the editors of Dryden's works, commenting on this epilogue, pictures the delight of the audience when Nell Gwynne "flung off her enforced gravity, and ran to the foot-lights to give vent to her own wild animal spirits;" and no doubt he is right about the delight and the animal spirits, but he perpetrates a strange anachronism in mentioning foot-lights, which were things of the dim and distant future. At this time the stage was lighted from above, by branches or hoops of candles suspended from the ceiling. Immediately after the Restoration, we are told, on Killigrew's authority, three pounds of tallow candles were all the light-giving material of the stage, but before many years had passed wax candles were employed instead of humble tallow. But even at the best we can easily understand that Cibber's remark as to the "obscurity of too great a distance" from the audience was no figure of speech, and can sympathize with Thackeray's pity for the *darkness* of our forefathers' lives.

But these same candles, in their decorous obscurity, concealed the weaknesses in the players' wardrobes which the garish light of day revealed. For this statement we have Mr. Pepys's authority. On March 19, 1666, the inquisitive diarist went to the King's Playhouse, which was closed for alterations, on purpose to have a close examination of the mysteries of the stage.

"And, indeed, it was a sight worthy seeing. But to see their clothes, and the various sorts, and what a mixture of things there was; here a wooden leg, there a ruff, here a hobby-horse, there a crown, would make a man split himself to see with laughing: and particularly Lacy's wardrobe, and Shotrell's. But then again to think how fine they show on the stage by candle-light, and how poor things they are to look at too near hand, is not pleasant at all."

It is scarcely necessary to say that such costumes as

Pepys saw made no pretension whatever to historical accuracy. A simple conventionality was the utmost that was attempted. The Romans wore garments somewhat resembling the *toga*, and the costume of Eastern nations was roughly suggested by barbaric ornaments, turbans, and feathers; but Henry V. wore the cast-off clothes of Charles II., and Hamlet and Macbeth were apparelled in such dresses as might have been worn in the Mall before the play began without attracting attention by their oddity. A huge periwig, of course, crowned the head of every actor, whether he played Roman, Early Briton, Spaniard, or Scot; whether the character he represented was one that had lived two thousand years before, or only fifty. Certain conspicuous characters, of periods so recent that a general conception of their peculiarities of costume still dwelt in the popular memory, were no doubt dressed with some attempt at verisimilitude—for instance, Henry VIII.—but even in such cases the correctly attired character was alone in his accuracy. So late as the middle of the eighteenth century, Davies mentions that the plays of *Richard III.* and *Henry VIII.* were distinguished by the two principal characters being dressed with propriety, though differently from all the rest. But all this is scarcely wonderful when we remember that Garrick played Macbeth in a scarlet-and-gold military suit of his own day, and that he dressed Hotspur in a laced frock and a Ramlies wig.

Such, then, was the theatre in which the second Charles took his pleasure; such the conditions under which the dramas of Dryden, Otway, and Nat Lee, the comedies of Congreve, Wycherley, and Farquhar, were first played. Let us now, having seen the theatre and its audience, make the acquaintance of the great actors over whose battle-ground we have been walking.

CHAPTER III.

THOMAS BETTERTON (1635-1660).

AMONG the motley crowd of players that fretted their hour upon the Restoration stage, one figure stands conspicuous—that of Thomas Betterton. Pre-eminent as an actor, he is not less remarkable for his qualities as a man. As the figures of his contemporaries pass before our mind's eye, vague and unsubstantial though they be, there is on most of them the smirch of some scandal, the stain of some crime. Nell Gwynne, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Knight, the two Marshalls, even the great Mrs. Barry, bear the imputation of a profligate life. Hart was the paramour of Nell Gwynne; Mountford lost his life because he was believed to have been the successful lover of Mrs. Bracegirdle; George Powell was a drunkard; Goodman, a highway robber; Kynaston is accused, in the filthy lampoons of the time, of gross immorality. Even the Diana of the stage, beautiful Anne Bracegirdle, is the subject of frequent attacks, which attributed her honourable and modest reputation to the cunning with which she concealed her amours. Among this wild rout Thomas Betterton walked unspotted. I have not, in the course of extensive wading through the mud-heaps of Restoration satire, met with one derogatory allusion to him, or to the great actress and good woman who was his wife. How

high a tribute this is to their worth can be understood when we remember how profligate and shameless was the life of court and society during much of his career, and how the profligacy was focussed in the theatre. There are some of Dryden's prologues and epilogues so atrocious in their filthiness that the player who spoke them and the audience for whose delectation they were written must have given up even the affectation of decency. And Dryden was not the only sinner, though perhaps he was the chief. The whole atmosphere of the theatre was indescribably wicked; yet, though Betterton is the actor of whom we know most, we know no hint that he was other than an upright and estimable man. Indeed, as will be related, we have positive evidence of his goodness and generosity.

Thomas Betterton was the son of Matthew Betterton, who is generally described as having been one of the under-cooks of King Charles I., although, as Colonel Chester points out in his invaluable work on Westminster Abbey, he described himself in his will as "gentleman," and bequeathed, among other valuables, his "grandfather's Seal Ring." In 1635 Matthew Betterton was living in Tothill Street, Westminster, in a house which was the property of his father-in-law, Thomas Flowerdew (or Flowerday), vintner, of St. Margaret's, Westminster.* Here Thomas Betterton was born, and, in the parish church of St. Margaret's, he was baptized on August 11, 1635. During the time of the Commonwealth Matthew Betterton seems to have lived in London; perhaps he had remained in it during all the troubles of the Civil Wars. At any rate, as soon as young Thomas

* Frances, daughter of Thomas Flowerdew, was Matthew Betterton's second wife. They were married in October, 1630, Thomas being their second child.

came to sufficient age to go out into the world, he was bound apprentice to a bookseller; the choice of his occupation being determined, as an apparently trustworthy tradition leads us to believe, by the intelligence and taste for reading which the youth manifested. As the actor himself in his old age told Pope that he was apprenticed to John Holden, it may be assumed that the publisher of *Gondibert* was his first employer. Here the youth was in a theatrical atmosphere, for Holden was the friend as well as publisher of Sir William Davenant, and his daughter was one of the first of Davenant's actresses. John Rhodes, who sold books at the sign of "The Bible," at Charing Cross, is said by Gildon to have been Betterton's employer; but it is impossible to decide whether this is an accurate statement, or whether it is merely a fable arising out of the fact that, when Rhodes became manager of the Cockpit, Betterton was one of the original members of his company. It is quite possible that the young man was first in the service of Holden, and afterwards in that of Rhodes; and it is more than probable, moreover, that he was for some time in business on his own account. This last statement is warranted by the existence of (at least) two little volumes which bear the imprint of Thomas Betterton. One is "A Mixt Poem, Partly Historicall, partly Panegyricall, upon the Happy Return of His Sacred Majesty Charles the Second. . . . By J. C. [Crouch], Gent., London. Printed for *Thomas Bettertun* at his shop in Westminster-hall, 1660." The other, "The Muses Joy For the Recovery of that weeping Vine, Henretta Maria," was "Printed for *Tho. Batterton*,"* Anno, 1661." I see no

* It may be convenient to note here that it is impossible to dogmatize on the spelling of seventeenth-century proper names. Betterton frequently appears in the cast of plays as "Batterton,"

reason to doubt that this was the actor, and that for some time he carried on his business of publisher as well as his profession of player, such double occupation being by no means uncommon. Mr. Sidney L. Lee, to whom belongs the credit of this interesting discovery, pointed out in *Notes and Queries* that Crouch's subsequent publications, as, for instance, his poem on the coming of Charles's Queen (1662), bore the imprint of a different publisher—a fact which strongly supports the theory that, for the first year or two of his stage career, Betterton did not entirely give up his connection with publishing.

It has been asserted that Betterton played in Sir William Davenant's spectacular and operatic productions during the last years of the Commonwealth, but this is highly improbable. Certainly he took no part of any importance, and his real connection with the stage began in 1660, when Rhodes, under a licence from General Monk, reopened the Cockpit in Drury Lane as a theatre.

To follow the fortunes of Rhodes's company, and of the other bodies of players which were speedily formed, is a task of some difficulty; for, unfortunately, the facts regarding them are very imperfectly known. Genest,* who may generally be relied on as a safe guide through the theatrical maze, here fails us. An unfortunate mistake in his interpretation of a series of entries in Pepys's *Diary* has led him on an utterly false trail, in the pursuit of which he not only goes wrong himself, but contradicts authorities who are quite accurate. The mistake is the confounding of Charles II.'s private theatre, situated at the Cockpit in St. James's Park, with the Cockpit Play-

and "Bettertun;" Mohun is often "Moone;" Mountford is "Monfort," "Mounfort," and even "Mumford."

* The Rev. John Genest's history of the Stage (10 vols. 8vo) is a monument of industry and research.

house in Drury Lane ; the effect of which, it will be seen, is very serious.

When General Monk, ruling London with his seven thousand soldiers, showed no leaning toward the Puritanical sect, and was even suspected of an intention of restoring the monarchy, the poor players took heart of grace, and John Rhodes, the bookseller to whom Betterton is said to have been apprenticed, applied for and obtained a licence to get together a company of actors and to give public performances. Rhodes was not without theatrical experience, for he had been wardrobe-keeper to the old actors of King Charles I.'s company at the Blackfriars house. At what precise date he obtained this licence it is impossible to say. Monk entered London on February 3, 1660, and the earliest allusion to a play which I can find is an entry by Pepys, on June 6, 1660, when he notes, "My letters tell me . . . that the two Dukes [Duke of York and Duke of Gloucester] do haunt the Park much, and they were at a play, *Madam Epicene*, the other day." But Rhodes in all probability got his licence some time before June. Downes says that he got it in the year 1659 (old reckoning), and, if we can trust this statement, it fixes the date as not later than March 24, 1660. At any rate, we may assume that it is roughly correct, and that, accordingly, Rhodes began to get his company together not later than the end of March. As a matter of necessity, he opened at one of the old theatres, which were standing unoccupied and ready to his hand. The Cockpit in Drury Lane was the playhouse which he chose, a small theatre, one of those which, before the Civil War, were called "Private Houses." In these the performances took place by candle-light, whereas the larger, or public playhouses, being partly open to the weather, were used only in daylight.

At the head of Rhodes's company was Betterton, who seems at once to have taken his position as leading actor, and, like his successor, David Garrick, to have developed immediately into a fully accomplished artist. Within a few months after his becoming an actor he had played with the utmost success such important parts as Pericles, Prince of Tyre; Archas in Fletcher's *Loyal Subject*; Memnon in the same author's *Mad Lover*; Deflores, the powerfully drawn villain of Rowley and Middleton's *Changeling*; and Marullo, the romantic hero of Massinger's *Bondman*. It is in connection with one of these characters that we have a curious little glimpse of the talented young actor. Mr. Pepys paid his first visit to the play after the Restoration on August 18, 1660, when he saw *The Loyal Subject* at the Court play. "After the play done," writes the diarist, "we went to drink, and by Captain Ferrer's means, Kinaston, and another that acted Archas the General, came and drank with us." The editor of Pepys's *Diary* remarks on this passage that the actor of Archas is unknown; but Downes expressly states that Betterton played the part at the same time that Kynaston, whom Pepys mentions, played leading female parts to his heroes. At this time Betterton was only five and twenty, yet his voice, Downes tells us, was "as audibly strong, full and articulate, as in the prime of his acting."

He had for his "heroine" Edward Kynaston, most beautiful of boys, whom Pepys enthusiastically described as "the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life." It is not probable that either of these young people had had any previous training in acting, and the rest of the company were, no doubt, equally inexperienced. Their names were Thomas Sheppey, Thomas Lovel, Thomas Lilleston, Cave Underhill, Robert Turner, Dixon, Robert

Nokes, James Nokes, Angel, Floid, William Betterton, and John Moseley.

This young company was no doubt first in the field, but it was soon opposed by very formidable rivals. The remnant of the old actors who survived the Commonwealth formed themselves into a company, and began to give performances at the Red Bull in St. John's Street. Here the leading actors were Michael Mohun, Charles Hart, Robert Shatterel, William Shatterel, Nicholas Burt, William Cartwright, Walter Clun, and William Wintersell. A third company was also constituted under the direction of William Beeston, who received a licence from Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels, to play "comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, pastoralls, and interludes" at the theatre at Salisbury Court. This house, like the Cockpit in Drury Lane, was small; the Red Bull, which the old actors occupied, was a large house, partly open to the weather. The composition of this company of Beeston's is a puzzle. Neither Wright nor Downes mentions it; and, indeed, it is difficult to imagine where his actors could come from. The only scrap of information which I have been able to gather is that in 1661 George Jolly was leading actor.* This I learn from the records of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, where, under date of November 13, 1661, I find an order that George Jolly and his company at the Cockpit should cease playing until their quarrel with their manager Beeston was adjusted. It will be observed that Beeston's company had left Salisbury Court by this time, and were

* George Jolly must have been sometimes a manager as well as an actor. On December 24, 1660, I find, in the *Calendar of State Papers*, he received a licence to build a theatre in London; and in January, 1663, he was licensed to play at any town in England except London and Westminster. In July, 1663, his first licence was revoked.

playing at the Cockpit, which Rhodes and his company had vacated.

These three companies were probably all formed not later than the end of June, 1660, and they were certainly all in existence in August of that year. This we learn in connection with a curious petition by one John Rogers, which

“ Most humbly sheweth :

“ That your petitioner, at the beginning of the late calamitys, lost thereby his whole estate, and during the warr susteyned much detriment and imprisonment, and lost his limbs or the use thereof; who served his Excellency the now Lord General, both in England and Scotland, and performed good and faithfull service; in consideration whereof and by being so much decreapitt as not to act any more in the wars, his Excellency was favourably pleased, for your petitioner's future subsistance . . . to grant him a tolleration to erect a playhouse or to have a share out of them already tollerated, your petitioner thereby undertaking to suppress all riots, tumults, or molestations that may thereby arise.”

John Rogers therefore prays his Majesty to confirm the grant made by General Monk, and to order the players to pay him an allowance, in return for which he would undertake to provide soldiers to keep order in the theatres. In answer to this petition, the king, on August 7, 1660, refers Mr. Rogers's case to Sir Henry Herbert, and he, on August 20, orders the actors to pay Rogers the allowance requested. This order is addressed “ To the Actors of the playhouses called the Red Bull, Cockpit, and theatre in Salisbury Court, and to every of them, in and about the citties of London and Westminster ”—affording thus a clear statement of the number of companies in existence.

On the very next day to that on which Sir Henry

Herbert, as Master of the Revels, gave this peremptory order to the actors, a fatal blow was given alike to his power and his profit. Up to this time Sir Henry, who had virtually been Master of the Revels since 1623, had ruled his unfortunate charges with a rod of iron, and with the strictest attention to making as much out of them as possible. Of his personal character we get rather a mean idea from his *Office-Book*, large portions of which are quoted by Malone. We see in these the picture of a grasping official, tenacious of his rights, eager to make money, overbearing and insolent to the unfortunates who were under his control, but in no way too proud to accept a present of money from them for services done. The act which gave the death-blow to the power of the Master of the Revels was the issue of a grant empowering Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant "to erect two companies of players, consistinge respectively of such persons as they shall chuse and appoint, and to purchase, builde, and erect, or hire at their charge, as they shall thinke fitt, two houses or theatres . . . for the representation of tragydies, comedyes, playes, operas, and all other entertainments of that nature, in convenient places."

Sir Henry Herbert was quick enough to see how disastrous to him this new departure would be, and he raised a shriek of protest. But his complaints were unavailing, and the grant to Killigrew and Davenant passed the Privy Signet on August 21, 1660. But, whether on account of Sir Henry Herbert's opposition or from the difficulty of making arrangements with the three companies already in existence, this grant seems to have been curiously inoperative. It is not surprising that on August 30, nine days after the date of the grant, the three companies of the Red Bull, the Cockpit, and

Salisbury Court, were still in existence ; * but it is curious that, so late as October 13, a settlement had not been come to.†

It is at this period, that is, between August and November, 1660, that the transactions of the stage are so difficult to trace, and, unfortunately, it is at this point that Genest breaks down. He says (vol. i. p. 30), "it is certain, from Pepys, that the old actors were in possession of the *Cockpit* in August, 1660." But he misreads Pepys—the diarist makes no such statement. Genest assumes that Pepys's entries regarding the Cockpit refer to the theatre in Drury Lane, and I am not aware that it has ever occurred to any stage historian to doubt that he was right. But the following entry in Pepys suggested to me the possibility of Genest's being wrong: "1660, November 20th. . . . This morning I found my Lord in bed late, he having been with the King, Queen, and Princesse, at the Cockpit all night, where General Monk treated them; and after supper a play." This suggested to me that all the entries regarding the Cockpit might refer to the Royal Playhouse in St. James's Park—a theory which careful examination fully confirmed. This examination showed that visits to the Cockpit are entered by the diarist in quite different terms from those employed to record visits to the ordinary theatres in Salisbury Court or Lincoln's Inn Fields. Here are entries of the latter order:—"1661, February 23rd. To the Play-house, and there saw *The Changeling*."—"1661, March 1st. To White-fryers [Salisbury Court], and saw *The Bondman* acted."—"1661,

* This is shown by a letter from Humphrey Mosely to Sir Henry Herbert, dated August 30, 1660, which is quoted by Malone.

† See *post*, p. 67, where Sir Henry Herbert's warrant of that date is referred to.

March 2nd. After dinner I went to the theatre." But there are always circumstances stated in connection with visits to the Cockpit, thus: "1660, August 18th. Captain Ferrers took me and Creed to the Cockpitt play."—"1660, October 11th. To walk in St. James's Park. . . . Here, in the Park, we met with Mr. Salisbury, who took me and Mr. Creed to the Cockpitt."—"1661, April 20th. To the Cockpitt; and there, by the favour of one Mr. Bowman, he and I got in."—"1662, November 17th. At Whitehall by appointment; Mr. Creed carried my wife and I to the Cockpitt, and we had excellent places." But the most conclusive entry of all is that of October 2, 1662—

"At night, hearing that there was a play at the Cockpit, (and my Lord Sandwich, who came to town last night, at it,) I do go thither, and by very great fortune did follow four or five gentlemen, who were carried to a little private door in a wall, and so crept through a narrow place, and come into one of the boxes next the King's."

Obviously it could not have been a public performance to which Pepys gained entrance in this surreptitious manner, and the entire matter of the entry shows clearly that the diarist did not refer to the Cockpit in Drury Lane. Of course, both companies of actors played at the Cockpit in St. James's Park, as they were commanded by the king; and the entry of August 18, 1660, really conveys no information regarding the regular location of the actors who that day played in the Royal Theatre. But Genest assumes that the old actors on that day played at, and were in possession of, the Cockpit play-house in Drury Lane; whence he deduces that Downes's statements regarding the houses at which the different companies acted are inaccurate throughout, and that Rhodes's company probably never acted at the Cockpit

in Drury Lane, nor the old actors at the Red Bull. But, as I have shown, his theory is founded on a complete misconception.

Genest's evidence thus invalidated, we are left pilotless to struggle through the confusing records which have come down to us, and are compelled to piece together scraps of fact which, on first view, seem hopelessly contradictory. Most staggering of all the documents are a couple of warrants, preserved by Malone, which were issued by Sir Henry Herbert in assertion of his undiminished authority. The first is dated October 8, 1660, is addressed "To Mr. John Rhodes at the Cockpitt playhouse in Drury Lane," and commands him "to attend mee concerning your playhouse called the Cockpitt playhouse in Drury Lane, and to bring with you such authority as you have for erecting of the said house into a playhouse, at your perill." The second is a "Warrant sent to the actors at the Cockpitt in Drury Lane by Tom Browne, the 13 Octob. 1660." Now, it would naturally be expected that a warrant addressed to Rhodes's company, as this apparently is, would be directed to Betterton as chief of the company—for it was usual to address such documents to the leading actor by name, and to his companions. But the direction of this warrant is, "To Mr. Michael Mohun, and the rest of the actors of the Cockpitt playhouse in Drury Lane." Thus is established the extraordinary fact that, in October, 1660, Rhodes, and presumably his company, were at the same theatre as Mohun and the rest of the old actors. At first sight this is incomprehensible—it is in direct contradiction to all our beliefs; and I confess that my first impression was that there was a blunder in the address. But, after careful sifting of the evidence, I have come to the conclusion that, however strange it may seem, these

two companies were amalgamated, though for a very short time.

The first point which is made clear is that, on October 13, 1660, the actors were under the control neither of Killigrew nor Davenant, for the warrant of that date alludes to complaints which had been made to the king by the two patentees regarding the prices charged by the actors for admission to the theatre; which complaints, says Sir Henry Herbert, "were made use of by the said Mr. Killigrew and Sir William D'Avenant as part of their suggestions for their pretended power, and for your late restraints." In a petition (No. viii. in Malone) another point is established. This petition is made to the king by Michael Mohun, Robert Shatterel, Charles Hart, Nich. Burt, William Cartwright, Walter Clun, and William Wintersell, and is apparently (it is not dated) a protest against the last-quoted warrant. In it occur these words: "And according to your Majesties approbation, from all the companies *we made election of one company.*"

The crucial point then comes—the discovery of any clear allusion to this united company; and this, I believe, I have accomplished. I find in the Lord Chamberlain's records a document dated October 6, 1660, constituting the king's company of comedians; and the list of actors appointed includes not only Mohun, Hart, and the other players who had played at the Red Bull, and who were afterwards, under Killigrew, known as "the King's Company," but also Edward Kynaston and Thomas Betterton, members of Rhodes's Cockpit company. If, therefore, the interpretation which I put upon these various transactions is just, we may consider it certain that, after the issue of the grant to Killigrew and Davenant on August 21, 1660, the king, wearied of the squabbles between Sir Henry Herbert, Killigrew, and Davenant,

erected the chief actors of both companies into one. This amalgamation no doubt lasted until Davenant took away a certain number of the actors to form a company under his management, which he did in November, 1660, as evidenced by an agreement dated the fifth of that month. This agreement, which is referred to later on, marks the clear divergence of the two companies, and from November, 1660, to November, 1682, Killigrew's and Davenant's companies existed as separate bodies.

The two managers were sufficiently interesting persons. Thomas Killigrew was the son of Sir Robert Killigrew, and was born in February, 1611. He was not educated at any university, but was made page to Charles I., to whom he was a faithful adherent during his changes of fortune. To Charles II. he was equally devoted, and in 1651 was deputed by that monarch to represent his maimed authority at Venice, as English Resident. But Killigrew was a somewhat disreputable representative, and was forced to give up his post at the remonstrance of the Venetian ambassador, who complained to the king of his Resident's vicious courses. During his abode at Venice, Killigrew seems to have written six plays, as we learn from Sir John Denham's verses on his return—

I.

“Our Resident Tom
From Venice is come,
And has left all the statesman behind him ;
Talks at the same pitch,
Is as wise, is as rich,
And just where you left him, you find him.

II.

“But who says he's not
A man of much plot,

May repent of this false accusation ;
 Having *plotted*, and penn'd,
 Six *plays* to attend
 On the *Farce* of his Negotiation."

Tom's tastes seem early to have run in the direction of theatricals, as witness Pepys's account of "Thos. Killigrew's way of getting to see plays when he was a boy. He would go to the Red Bull, and when the man cried to the boys, 'Who will go and be a devil, and he shall see the play for nothing?' then would he go in, and be a devil upon the stage, and so get to see plays for nothing." At the Restoration, Killigrew came over with the king himself, and Pepys records, on May 24, 1660, how, "walking upon the decks, where persons of honour all the afternoon, among others, Thomas Killigrew (a merry droll, but a gentleman of great esteem with the King), who told us many merry stories." Perhaps we need not regret that these anecdotes are unreported.

Killigrew, after the Restoration, held the appointment of a Groom of the Bedchamber, and that of the King's Jester. Chalmers (*Apology for the Believers*, p. 527) seems to object to Anthony à Wood's curt statement that Killigrew was the King's Jester, but the old biographer is strictly accurate in so putting it. The Lord Chamberlain's records contain a copy of a warrant, dated July 12, 1661, "to deliver to Mr. Killigrew thirty yards of velvett, three dozen of fringe, and sixteene yards of Damaske for the yeare 1661;" and this is headed by the blunt statement. "Livery for y^e Jester."* It is to Killigrew's credit that some anecdotes of his conduct in this office show him

* *À propos* of this may be noted an entry in Pepys (February 13, 1668): "Mr. Brisband tells me in discourse that Tom Killigrew hath a fee out of the wardrobe for cap and bells, under the title of the King's Foole or Jester."

using his folly to stimulate the king's torpid sense of duty towards his realm. Looking for more employment, or at least for more profit, the jester cast his eye on the theatre; and on the actors accordingly he was quartered.

Sir William Davenant, the other manager, was of more plebeian descent than Killigrew. His father was a vintner in Oxford, at the Crown Tavern, where the future poet-laureate was born in February, 1606. His mother was a very beautiful woman, and a foolish story arose that Shakespeare, who frequently stayed at the Crown Tavern on his way to and from Warwickshire, was Mrs. Davenant's lover and the father of William. Malone quotes the Aubrey MS. to show that this story was endorsed, if not originally promulgated, by Davenant himself, "Now Sir William would sometimes, when he was pleasant over a glasse of wine with his most intimate friends (*e.g.* Sam Butler, author of *Hudibras*, *etc.*, *etc.*), say, that it seem'd to him, that he writt with the very spirit that Shakespeare [wrote with], and was contented enough to bee thought his son: he would tell them the story as above." After a brief schooling, Davenant was made page to the Duchess of Richmond, and was afterwards in the household of Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke. On the death of Ben Jonson, in 1637, Davenant, who had cultivated the friendship of the court, obtained the vacant laurel. In the Civil Wars he fought valiantly for the king, and was knighted; at the end of them he went into exile. Being taken at sea, on his way to Virginia, by a Parliamentary ship, he was brought prisoner to England, and was in imminent danger of execution. But his life was saved, by Milton, according to one account; by two aldermen of York, according to another; and in 1656, as already related, he began to give dramatic performances. At the Restoration no

ill will was shown on account of the indulgence given him by Cromwell, and he seems to have been taken into immediate favour by Charles II., by whom he, too, was presented with an income at the expense of the poor players.

When the two patentees divided the actors between them, the younger company, which had been under Rhodes, was transferred to Davenant, the only important exception being Kynaston, who remained with the old actors under Killigrew. In Davenant's company Betterton was the leading player, and his name is the first mentioned of the actors who entered into the agreement of November 5, 1660.

The high contracting parties are "Sir William Davenant of London, Kt., of the first part; Thomas Batterton, Thomas Sheppey, Robert Noakes, James Noakes, Thomas Lovell, John Moseley, Cave Underhill, Robert Turner, and Thomas Lilleston, of the second part; and Henry Harris, of the city of London, painter, of the third part." All the actors mentioned as companions of Betterton had been members of Rhodes's company at the Cockpit; but Henry Harris is a new name in the transactions of the period. I have no doubt that he is the celebrated actor who, as recorded by Pepys, was afterwards considered Betterton's rival, and of whom there is a beautiful print, in the character of Wolsey, in the Pepysian Library at Cambridge. His Christian name has sometimes been given as Joseph, but this is a mistake, arising from the fact that there was another less important actor of that name. Genest says (i. 387) that his Christian name "is probably unknown," but it seems to me beyond any question that this Henry Harris, painter, was the great actor. By the terms of the agreement, Betterton and his comrades were to act at the Salisbury

Court Playhouse (or elsewhere) "untill the said Sir William Davenant shall provide a newe theatre with scenes." When the new theatre was ready, Betterton and his companions were, at a week's notice, to cease playing, to shut up their old house, and "to remove and joyne with the said Henry Harris, and with other men and women provided or to be provided by the said Sir Wm. Davenant, to performe such tragedies, comedies, playes, and representations in that theatre to be provided by him the said Sir William as aforesaid."

At the new playhouse the receipts, after deducting the general expenses, were to be divided into fifteen shares; three of which were to go to the manager, for "house-rent, buildinge, scaffoldinge, and making of frames for scenes," and for "provision of habitts, properties, and scenes, for a supplement of the said theatre." Of the remaining twelve shares, the expense of "men hirelinges" (whom we now call by the less picturesque name of "supers") and other customary expenses being deducted, seven belonged to the manager, "to mainteine all the women that are to performe or represent women's parts in the aforesaid tragedies, etc.," and "in consideration of erectinge and establishinge them to bee a Companie, and his the said Sir Wms. paines and expences to that purpose for many yeeres." The remaining five shares to be divided among the actors, "whereof the said Henry Harris is to have an equal share with the greatest proportion in the said five shares or proportions"—a stipulation showing the importance attached to Harris's services. Indeed, he speedily became so popular an actor that he set himself up as the rival, or rather the superior, of Betterton. In July, 1663, he deserted Davenant's company because he was refused a higher salary than any of his companions. He demanded, says

Pepys, "20*l.* for himself extraordinary, more than Betterton, or any body else, upon every new play, and 10*l.* upon every revive;" and when Davenant declined to accede to his terms, swore he would act there no more. He expected to be allowed to join Killigrew's company, but this the king prevented; and Mr. Harris, after "resting" for a few months, was glad to rejoin his old comrades. Pepys's gossiping shoemaker told the diarist that "the fellow grew very proud of late, the King and everybody else crying him up so high, and that above Betterton, he being a more ayery man, as he is indeed."

The contrast between these two artists is very interesting even to us now, displaying as they do two types which are familiar to this day. Betterton was above all an artist. Social distinctions came to him, but they were unsought tributes to his greatness in his profession, and his real life was divided between his home and the theatre. But Harris was a man about town. His dressing-room was the rendezvous of the wits, who came there to discuss the play, and, to quote Pepys, "to assign meetings." His companions were "as very rogues as any in the town, who were ready to take hold of every woman that came by them;" and the popular young player was, if one may judge by the unsavoury anecdote of Lady Bennett and her ladies which he retailed to Pepys, as very a rogue as any of them. If Mr. Pepys wanted a companion to go merry-making, if he wanted an entertaining friend for a dinner-party, if he wanted to see a new picture, Harris was always at his service; and, being an excellent musician, a famous judge of painting, and a man of the most varied knowledge, Pepys delighted in his company. Harris's knowledge of painting is constantly alluded to by Pepys, and this confirms my theory that the "Henry Harris,

painter," of Davenant's company was the famous actor. The tradition is that Harris had been a seal-engraver; but as this rests on the notoriously untrustworthy authority of Curll's *History of the Stage*, it need not disturb us.

Among the minor provisions of the agreement between Davenant and his company are one or two articles which curiously illustrate the theatrical usages of the time. For instance, we learn that the "general receipte of the theatre" was by "ballatine, or tickets sealed for all doores and boxes." Davenant provided three persons to receive the money for these tickets, in a room adjoining the theatre—a sort of box office, in fact—and the actors were entitled to appoint two or three persons to act as a check upon the manager's nominees. Another interesting point is that the manager's seven-fifteenths had to be handed over to him every night. Again, it is curious that a provision should be in these articles which exists almost unchanged to the present day. It is that the manager should not provide "eyther hatts, feathers, gloves, ribbons, sworde-belts, bands, stockings, or shoes, for any of the men actors aforesaid, unless it be a propertie."

Under these articles Davenant's company began to play at Salisbury Court Theatre on November 15, 1660. A curious regulation was made on December 12, 1660, by which certain plays were set aside as the special property of Davenant's company. These, according to the Lord Chamberlain's records, Davenant proposed "to reform and make fitt for the Company of Actors appointed under his direction and command." They were the following plays of Shakespeare: *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Henry VIII.*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*; Sir John Denham's *Sophy*; and John Webster's *Duchess of Malfy*. In addition to these, Davenant had,

for two months from the date of the permission, sole right to Shakespeare's *Pericles*, and to *The Mad Lover*, *The Maid in the Mill*, *The Spanish Curate*, *The Loyal Subject*, and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* by John Fletcher. He was also allowed the sole right, apparently in perpetuity, to produce his own plays. The edict winds up with a prohibition against any actor deserting Davenant's company for that of Killigrew, or *vice versâ*.

This prohibition was reaffirmed in the Patents which, two years later, were issued to Davenant and Killigrew, and formed the final authority under which they conducted their theatres. Davenant's Patent was dated January 15, 1663, while Killigrew's bore the date of April 25, 1662. The enlarged powers conferred by these Patents were not obtained without considerable skirmishing between the patentees and their old enemy, Sir Henry Herbert. Against Davenant the Master of the Revels brought two actions at law, one of which he gained, but lost the other. He also brought two actions against Mohun and his fellow-actors, and on May 6, 1662, Betterton was sued for offending against Sir Henry's privileges. How the action against Betterton ended we do not know, but the Master of the Revels seems to have won both cases against the old actors.

A glance at the names of the comrades of Betterton who signed the agreement with Davenant shows that Kynaston, Dixon, Angel, William Betterton, and Floid do not appear. Kynaston has become a member of Killigrew's company; William Betterton has met his death while swimming in the Thames at Wallingford; and Floid is also probably dead, for I cannot trace his name to any character after the company came under Davenant's command. Dixon's name was perhaps omitted because of his insignificance (his line of business

seems to have been such parts as Rosencrantz); but the absence of Angel's name is not to be accounted for on the same hypothesis. He was a comedian of great merit, and played many important parts between 1660 and 1673. It may possibly be that he was a very inferior actor in 1660, and that he afterwards developed extraordinary merit; otherwise I can suggest no reason for the omission of his name from the list of actors who entered into articles with Davenant. Of these actors, four became famous—Thomas Betterton, James Nokes, Cave Underhill, and Henry Harris; the others were never more than "respectable." Sheppey appears to have held the first place in the second rank, for he was chosen as one of three actors who were to serve as deputies for Sir William Davenant, his companions being Betterton and James Nokes. Of Robert Nokes, brother of the great actor, James Nokes, we know little or nothing. Indeed, so meagre is the information regarding him that if Downes, who never distinguishes the one brother from the other, had not chronicled the death of Robert Nokes before 1673, we should have been in some doubt whether James or Robert was the more famous brother's name. Lovell seems to have played "old men," and to have been an actor of some importance. Among his characters the most notable were Polonius and Malvolio. Lilleston played the King in *Hamlet*, and must have been a very useful second-rate actor, for he played in all classes of parts.

Compared with this young and not very powerful company, the old actors, who began playing at the Theatre in Vere Street, Clare Market, under Killigrew's management, on November 8, 1660, make a formidable show—on paper, at least. Michael Mohun and Charles Hart, whom Rymer the critic called, in 1677, the *Æsopus* and *Roscius* of the English stage, were already

actors of established reputation. As a boy, Mohun had been trained under Beeston at the Cockpit, and, before the Civil War, must have come to something like man's estate, for Wright records that the part of Bellamente in Shirley's *Love's Cruelty*, which Mohun played after the Restoration, had been his character before the Civil Wars. Bellamente is a part which a boy could not act. In the Wars Mohun specially distinguished himself, and attained the rank of captain. On the final downfall of the monarchy, he served in Flanders, whence he returned with the title of major, by which he is generally described. Hart, grandson of Shakespeare's sister Joan, was boy or apprentice to Robinson at the Blackfriars Theatre, and played female parts. He too served in the wars, and was a lieutenant of horse in Prince Rupert's regiment. Burt was trained under Shank at the Blackfriars, and afterwards under Beeston at the Cockpit. Here he played the principal female characters, one of his best parts being Clariana in *Love's Cruelty*. Clun was a boy-actress at the Blackfriars; Shatterel was trained by Beeston at the Cockpit; while Cartwright and Wintersell belonged to the private house in Salisbury Court. Regarding Lacy we know little more than that he was a dancing-master, and that he fought in the Civil Wars. In all probability he had become an actor before 1642, for not only does Wright treat him as one of the generation of Hart, Mohun, Burt, Clun, and Shatterel, but we find that he was playing leading parts as early as May, 1662, and that Pepys, in June, 1663, declares his preference for him over any of his distinguished comrades. Among the other members of the King's company were Kynaston, already famous as a boy-actress, Richard Baxter, Thomas Loveday, and Theophilus Bird. It seems certain, too, that, in spite of the old tradition that

Davenant's actresses were the first women who appeared on the Restoration stage, Killigrew numbered female performers among his company almost from the first. Within two months of his opening Pepys saw women on his stage. "1661, January 3. To the Theatre, where was acted *Beggar's Bush*, it being very well done; and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." On the 20th of the previous November, the diarist, paying his first visit to Killigrew's new theatre, had seen the same play acted entirely by men and boys; so it may be assumed that women first appeared between November 20, 1660, and January 3, 1661. We know from *A Prologue, to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage, in the tragedy called "The Moor of Venice,"* by Thomas Jordan, that Desdemona was the first part played by a female; and, as Malone ascertained from a manuscript of Sir Henry Herbert's that *Othello* was played by the old actors on December 8, 1660, for the first time that season, it is almost certain that this was the date of the first appearance of women on our stage. Of course, it was not at once possible to cast all the female characters to women. On January 4, 1661, the night after that on which Pepys saw the *Beggar's Bush* played by women, he saw Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady* acted by a man;* and three days afterwards he saw Kynaston in *The Silent Woman*. Again, on the next day (January 8, 1661) Pepys saw Jonson, Fletcher, and Middleton's comedy of *The Widow*, on which his criticism is that it was "an indifferent good play, but wronged by the women's being much too sad in their parts." From this time no doubt men were rapidly taken out of female

* This is shown by his chronicling on February 12, 1661, "To the Theatre, and there saw *The Scornful Lady*, now done by a woman, which makes the play much better than ever it did to me."

characters, except where the design was to represent old and hideous women.

Jordan's prologue contains some interesting lines on the men who had up to this time played female characters—

"I come, unknown to any of the rest,
To tell you news ; I saw the lady drest :
The woman plays to-day ; mistake me not,
No man in gown, nor page in petticoat :
A woman to my knowledge ; yet I can't,
If I should die, make affidavit on't.

In this reforming age
We have intents to civilize the stage.
Our women are defective, and so siz'd,
You'd think they were some of the guard disguis'd :
For, to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen ;
With bone so large, and nerve so in compliant,
When you call *DESDEMONA*, enter *GIANT*."

Old Chetwood tells a story which amply illustrates the absurdity of the "men-actresses." King Charles II., he says, coming to the theatre to see *Hamlet*, and being kept waiting for some time, sent the Earl of Rochester behind to see what was causing the delay. He returned with the information that "the Queen was not quite shaved." "Odsfish !" said the king, "I beg her Majesty's pardon. We'll wait till her barber has done with her."

The female members of Killigrew's company, mentioned by Downes, were Mrs. Corey, whose mimicry of Lady Harvey, at the instigation of Lady Castlemaine, caused a riot in 1669 ; Mrs. Ann Marshall and Mrs. Rebecca Marshall, the not too reputable daughters of the Presbyterian divine, Stephen Marshall Mrs. Eastland ;

Mrs. Weaver ; Mrs. Uphill ; Mrs. Knipp, the *chère amie* of Pepys ; Mrs. Rutter ; and Mrs. Hughes, Prince Rupert's mistress, for whom it is claimed, with some probability, that she was the Desdemona regarding whom Jordan's prologue was written, and therefore the first woman who acted on the English stage after the Restoration.

CHAPTER IV.

THOMAS BETTERTON (1660-1682).

IN the twenty-two years (1660-1682) during which the companies of Davenant and Killigrew existed as separate establishments, many changes took place in them and in their surroundings. Both changed the scene of their operations. The first removal was made by Davenant, who, as we have seen, covenanted with the players to provide, as soon as possible, a new theatre; and who accordingly built a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which was opened in June, 1661. This theatre was situated in Portugal Row—that is, the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, in which now stands the Royal College of Surgeons. Here, no doubt, Harris joined the company, as stipulated in the agreement, and with him came, according to Downes, Price, Richards, and Blagden. Here, also, we must assume, women joined the company: Downes gives their names as Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Saunderson, Mrs. Davies, Mrs. Long, Mrs. Ann Gibbs, Mrs. Holden, and Mrs. Jennings.* The first four of these were Davenant's principal actresses, and were boarded by him at his own

* I need scarcely note that the use of the word "Mrs." does not imply that the ladies were married. "Miss," as describing an unmarried lady, did not come into use for more than half a century after this time. When a seventeenth-century writer uses the word he means to describe either a very young girl or a kept mistress.

house; one of the provisions of the agreement being, as will be remembered, that he was to "mainteine all the women that are to performe."

Most interesting of these ladies is Mrs. Saunderson, who, in December, 1662, became the wife of Betterton. In her marriage license, the terms of which have been recorded by Colonel Chester, she is described as Mary Saunderson, of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, spinster. Her mother was a widow, Christian name not recorded, whose consent to the marriage was attested by Enoch Darrack, of St. Pancras, Soper Lane, London, grocer. The license is dated December 24, 1662, and from it we learn that Thomas Betterton was then supposed to be about thirty, and Mrs. Saunderson about five and twenty.

If Killigrew had the advantage of Davenant in being the first to introduce women to the stage, to Davenant belongs the credit of introducing elaborate scenery and decorations. Downes says that Davenant "Open'd his House with the said Plays [*Siege of Rhodes* and *Wits*] having new Scenes and Decorations, being the first that e're were introduc'd in *England*." Wright, too, states expressly that scenes had been "introduced upon the publick Stage by Sir *William Davenant* at the *Duke's Old Theater* in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*." There has been much fighting round this question of the introduction of scenery, but I can see no reason to doubt the statement of Wright, that scenery was first introduced on the *public* stage by Davenant in 1661: that is, in regular drama, as distinguished from his operatic productions before the Restoration.

Downes states that Davenant opened his new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in the spring of 1662, but this is a blunder. We know that the actual date was some day in June, 1661; for on July 2, 1661, Pepys saw the second

part of the *Siege of Rhodes*, at what he calls Sir William Davenant's "Opera," and he notes that this was "the fourth day that it hath begun." It seems so strange that Downes should have made such an error in a date which ought to have impressed itself on his memory—for on the day on which Davenant opened his theatre Downes made his first appearance as an actor—that it has been doubted whether Pepys and he refer to the same building. But this is easily proved, because Pepys saw, before the spring of 1662, several of the plays which Downes catalogues as following the opening of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Thus Downes gives *The Wits* as the play which, he expressly states, followed next after *The Siege of Rhodes*, and Pepys saw *The Wits* on August 15, 1661. *Hamlet* is the next play mentioned by the old prompter; and Pepys duly chronicles it on August 24. Next comes *Love and Honour*; and Pepys was present at its first production on October 21, 1661. If a further proof of Downes's blunder were wanted, it can be found. He states that the king first attended a public theatre on the opening day of Davenant's playhouse. Now, Charles was at a public theatre long before the spring of 1662. On August 15, 1661, Pepys himself saw the king at the Lincoln's Inn Fields house; again he saw him at Vere Street less than a fortnight afterwards; on September 7, at Vere Street; September 11, at Lincoln's Inn Fields; and on October 10, at Vere Street. We can thus fix the opening of Lincoln's Inn Fields playhouse as having taken place in June, 1661. According to Pepys, the new theatre with its novelty of scenery played havoc with the opposition house. On July 4 he notes how strange it was "to see this house [Vere Street], that used to be so thronged, now empty since the Opera began; and so will continue for a while, I believe."

Within a year of their opening the Duke's company received some valuable recruits—Smith, Sandford, Medburn, Young, and Norris; and these practically completed the company. Their list of plays included a few of Shakespeare's works. Foremost among these was *Hamlet*, which enjoys the distinction of being one of the very few Shakespearian plays of which Pepys had any great opinion. On several occasions he passes it with a sort of indulgent abstention from criticism, and once (August 31, 1668) he actually allows that he was mightily pleased with it. Nay, more: he employed himself one Sunday afternoon (November 13, 1664) in committing a portion of it to memory. As he notes, "With my wife within doors, and getting a speech out of *Hamlett*, 'to bee or not to bee,' without book." The cast of the tragedy was a strong one. Betterton himself must have been a tower of strength as Hamlet. Downes says that he was instructed in the "business" of the part by Davenant, who had studied the playing of Taylor of the Blackfriars, an actor who had been trained in the character by Shakespeare himself. Downes adds, "which by his exact performance of it, gain'd him Esteem and Reputation, Superlative to all other Plays." Cibber exhausts himself in praise of Betterton's Hamlet.

"How," he exclaims, "shall I shew you *Betterton*? Should I therefore tell you that all the *Othellos*, *Hamlets*, *Hotspurs*, *Mackbeths*, and *Brutus's* whom you may have seen since his Time, have fallen far short of him; this still would give you no Idea of his particular Excellence. Let us see then what a particular Comparison may do! whether that may yet draw him nearer to you.

"You have seen a *Hamlet* perhaps, who, on the first Appearance of his Father's Spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining Vociferation requisite to express Rage and Fury, and the House has thunder'd with Applause; tho' the

mis-guided Actor was all the while (as *Shakespear* terms it) tearing a Passion into Rags—I am the more bold to offer you this particular Instance, because the late Mr. *Addison*, while I sat by him to see this Scene acted, made the same Observation, asking me, with some Surprise, if I thought *Hamlet* should be in so violent a Passion with the Ghost, which, tho' it might have astonish'd, it had not provok'd him? for you may observe that in this beautiful Speech the Passion never rises beyond an almost breathless Astonishment, or an Impatience, limited by filial Reverence, to enquire into the suspected Wrongs that may have rais'd him from his peaceful Tomb! and a Desire to know what a Spirit so seemingly distress might wish or enjoin a sorrowful Son to execute towards his future Quiet in the Grave? This was the Light into which *Betterton* threw this Scene; which he open'd with a Pause of mute Amazement! then rising slowly to a solemn, trembling Voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the Spectator as to himself! and in the descriptive Part of the natural Emotions which the ghastly Vision gave him, the boldness of his Expostulation was still govern'd by Decency, manly, but not braving; his Voice never rising into that seeming Outrage or wild Defiance of what he naturally rever'd. But alas! to preserve this medium, between mouthing and meaning too little, to keep the Attention more pleasingly awake by a temper'd Spirit than by meer Vehemence of Voice, is of all the Master-strokes of an Actor the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equal'd *Betterton*."

In *The Laureat*, a venomous attack upon Colley Cibber, published in 1740, the author specially mentions *Betterton's Hamlet*. He says—

"I have lately been told by a Gentleman who has frequently seen Mr. *Betterton* perform this Part of *Hamlet*, that he has observ'd his Countenance (which was naturally ruddy and sanguin) in this Scene of the fourth Act where his Father's Ghost appears, thro' the violent and sudden Emotions of Amazement and Horror, turn instantly on the

Sight of his Father's Spirit, as pale as his Neckcloth,* when every Article of his Body seem'd to be affected with a Tremor inexpressible ; so that, had his Father's Ghost actually risen before him ; he could not have been seized with more real Agonies ; and this was felt so strongly by the Audience, that the Blood seemed to shudder in their Veins likewise, and they in some Measure partook of the Astonishment and Horror, with which they saw this excellent Actor affected."

We can scarcely wonder, then, that Pepys interjects notes of admiration again and again regarding this great impersonation. "Above all," he writes, on August 24, 1661, "Betterton did the Prince's part beyond imagination." Again, on May 28, 1663, he "saw *Hamlett* done, giving us fresh reason never to think enough of Betterton." And his last notice of the play (August 31, 1668) appropriately reaches a climax of approval—"To the Duke of York's Playhouse, and saw *Hamlet*, which we have not seen this year before, or more ; and mightily pleased with it ; but, above all, with Betterton, the best part, I believe, that ever man acted."

His Ophelia was Mrs. Saunderson ; the King was played by Lilliston ; the Ghost, by Richards ; Cave Underhill played 1st Gravedigger, a character which he made his own ; Polonius was Lovel ; and the Queen was acted by the young and beautiful Mrs. Davenport ; Harris, important actor though he was, played the small but beautiful part of Horatio. One would naturally have

* In the marvellous collection of theatrical portraits which is worthily housed in the Garrick Club, there is a picture of Betterton and Mrs. Barry in this very scene. The actor's face is certainly depicted pale as his neckcloth, which, by the way, is a very clerical-looking article of costume. Indeed, the whole dress is distinctly ministerial, and is in style not unlike that in which Dr. Cantwell is played. Mrs. Barry wears a crimson velvet robe, over a white satin underskirt.

expected that Harris would have been the Laertes of the cast ; but, unless Downes has blundered, this is not so. *Hamlet*, to the credit of the public taste be it recorded, was a conspicuous success. "No succeeding Tragedy for several Years got more Reputation, or money to the Company than this."

The next of Shakespeare's plays produced at the Duke's Theatre was *Twelfth Night*, which Pepys saw on September 11, 1661. On this occasion he does not commit himself to any opinion of its merits or demerits. He certainly confesses that the play was tiresome, but he seems to attribute this to his own frame of mind rather than to any defect in the entertainment. Why his mind was ill at ease will be best gathered from his entry—

"Walking through Lincoln's Inn Fields, observed at the Opera a new Play, *Twelfth Night*, was acted there, and the King there : so I, against my own mind and resolution, could not forbear to go in, which did make the play seem a burthen to me ; and I took no pleasure at all in it : and so, after it was done, went home with my mind troubled for my going thither, after my swearing to my wife that I would never go to a play without her."

He saw the play again on January 6, 1663 (which was Twelfth Day), and then delivered his mind thus : "It be but a silly play, and not relating at all to the name or day." From Downes we learn that *Twelfth Night* was a great success. He says that it had "mighty Success by its well Performance." In it the rollicking character of Sir Toby Belch was splendidly acted by the same player who had, a few weeks previously, given such tragic and pathetic expression to the woes of the melancholy Prince of Denmark. Yes, Betterton acted Hamlet and Sir Toby Belch apparently with equal success and effect—surely a wonderful proof of Cibber's dictum that "any-

thing naturally written ought to be in every one's way that pretends to be an actor." Sir Andrew Ague-check was played by Harris; the Fool, by Cave Underhill; and Malvolio, by Lovel. The only female character mentioned by Downes is Olivia, which was played by Mrs. Ann Gibbs.

If Pepys is contemptuous about *Twelfth Night*, he is rabid against *Romeo and Juliet*, which he saw on the first day of its production by the Duke's company, March 1, 1662. "It is," says the dogmatic diarist, "a play of itself the worst that ever I heard." It is only just to take into consideration, however, that the actors were not too well up in their parts. As Pepys notes, "I am resolved to go no more to see the first time of acting, for they were all of them out more or less." Yet we can scarcely imagine that, even taking all disadvantages into account, such a cast of the play as Pepys saw can have been ineffective. Harris was principal, playing Romeo, while Mrs. Saunderson was Juliet. Betterton took the character of Mercutio, which, though subordinate to Romeo, and much shorter, is no less difficult. This distribution of the two parts is somewhat curious in view of Pepys's opinion—and Pepys was a good judge of acting—of the respective merits of the two actors. He singles out as Harris's most conspicuous quality, and the only point in which he was clearly superior to Betterton, that he was "a more ayery man." Now, airiness strikes one as the prime qualification of Mercutio rather than of Romeo. The comedy characters of Gregory and Sampson were acted by Cave Underhill and by the famous representative of villains, Sandford—another instance of versatility. Whether the public felt the catastrophe of Shakespeare's play to be too harrowing, or whether the Honourable James Howard simply suffered from an attack of the

adaptor's mania, we cannot tell; but we know that this author metamorphosed *Romeo and Juliet* into a tragedy, in which both lovers survived, and, as we may suppose, lived happy ever afterwards. The oddity of this arrangement is not lessened by the fact that you could pay your money and take your choice between Shakespeare and Howard. "When the Tragedy was Reviv'd again," says Downes, "'twas Play'd Alternately, Tragical one Day, and Tragicomical the another; for several Days together." It was probably in Howard's alteration that the character of Count Paris's Wife, which Downes mentions, appeared. It was played by Mrs. Holden, regarding whom the old prompter relates an anecdote which smacks so strongly of Restoration humour that, to use Genest's favourite expression in such cases, "it must not be quoted."

A considerable interval elapsed between this play and the next recorded Shakespearian production at the Duke's Theatre, which was *Henry VIII.* It was produced some time in December, 1663, but Pepys, being under one of his periodical vows to abstain from wasting his time at the theatre, did not see it till January 1, 1664. Then he chronicles—

"Went to the Duke's House, the first play I have been at these six months, according to my last vowe, and here saw the so much cried-up play of *Henry the Eighth*; which, though I went with resolution to like it, is so simple a thing, made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done."

From a passage in Pepys (December 10, 1663) it would almost seem as if Davenant had altered Shakespeare's play. Pepys, visiting his shoemaker, hears "of a rare play to be acted this week of Sir William

Davenant's; the story of Henry the Eighth, with all his wives."

Particular care seems to have been taken to make this a specially complete production—which, by the way, rather tends to encourage the idea that it was one of the manager's own adaptations. Downes tells us that "this Play, by Order of Sir *William Davenant*, was all new Cloath'd in proper Habits: The King's was new, all the Lords, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the Doctors, Proctors, Lawyers, Tip-staves, new Scenes." The result of all this care was satisfactory, for the public do not appear to have shared Pepys's contempt for the play. "Every part, by the great Care of Sir *William*, being exactly perform'd; it being all new Cloath'd and new Scenes; it continu'd Acting 15 Days together with general Applause." Downes commits himself to the most enthusiastic eulogy of Betterton and Harris, who played the King and the Cardinal. He says, "The part of the King was so right and justly done by Mr. *Betterton*, he being Instructed in it by Sir *William*, who had it from Old Mr. *Lowen*, that had his Instructions from Mr. *Shakespeare* himself, that I dare and will aver, none can, or will come near him in this Age, in the performance of that part: Mr. *Harris's* performance of Cardinal *Wolsey*, was little Inferior to that, he doing it with such just State, Port and Mein, that I dare affirm, none hitherto has Equall'd him." Queen Katherine, which was, more than a century later, Mrs. Siddons's masterpiece, was played by Mrs. Saunderson, whose name is now given as Mrs. Betterton.

Although Downes does not catalogue *Macbeth* until about 1672, we know from Pepys that it was produced at the Duke's Theatre on November 5, 1664. On this occasion he pronounces it "a pretty good play, but admirably

acted;" but he is more enthusiastic two years later (December 28, 1666), when he found it "most excellently acted, and a most excellent play for variety." On January 7, 1667, he again went to the Duke's Theatre to see *Macbeth*, "which, though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable." Three months later (April 19, 1667) Pepys "saw *Macbeth*, which, though I have seen it often, yet is it one of the best plays for a stage, and variety of dancing and Musick, that ever I saw." These allusions to variety and divertisement point plainly to the fact that Pepys saw Davenant's wretched version of Shakespeare's play with all its atrocities of singing witches and other excrescences. Betterton was a grand representative of *Macbeth*, and the Lady was played by his wife.

King Lear completes the list of Shakespeare's plays acted by the Duke's company about this time. Pepys did not see it, so we do not know its date, but Downes tells us that it was played "as Mr. *Shakespear* Wrote it; before it was alter'd by Mr. *Tate*."

Sir William Davenant's company naturally acted several of their manager's own productions. *The Siege of Rhodes* was, as has been noticed, the play with which he opened his new theatre, and he followed it up by his comedy of *The Wits*, produced on August 15, 1661. Two months afterwards another of his plays saw the light, the tragicomedy of *Love and Honour*. Pepys saw it on the first day of its production, October 21, 1661, and allowed it to be a good play and well acted. It certainly seems to have been magnificently dressed. Downes tells us that "this Play was Richly Cloth'd; The King giving Mr. *Betterton* his Coronation Suit, in which

he Acted the Part of Prince *Alvaro*; The Duke of *York* giving Mr. *Harris* his, who did Prince *Prospero*; And my Lord of *Oxford*, gave Mr. *Joseph Price* his, who did *Lionel*, the Duke of *Parma's* Son." This proceeding must strike modern readers as a somewhat curious one. Fancy the Prince of Wales giving his state robes to Mr. Irving to use in a great production at the Lyceum! It is an interesting proof of the close connection between the court and the theatre during the time of Charles II. On February 18, 1662, Pepys saw another of Davenant's plays, *The Law against Lovers*. This, a mutilation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, with the characters of Benedick and Beatrice thrown in, Pepys considered "a good play, and well performed." Another, outrage on an old author was committed by Davenant in his *Rivals*, a bad alteration of Fletcher's *Two Noble Kinsmen*, which was seen by Pepys on September 10, 1664. He found it "no excellent play, but good acting in it." Downes notes that all the women's characters were admirably acted, "chiefly Celia [should be Celania], a Shepherdess being Mad for Love; especially in Singing several Wild and Mad Songs—

'My Lodging is on the Cold Ground,' etc.

She perform'd that so Charmingly, that not long after, it Rais'd her from her Bed on the Cold Ground, to a Bed Royal." This is, no doubt, an allusion to Moll Davis, and her amour with the king. But Downes is probably wrong in connecting this *liaison* with this particular production of *The Rivals*, for, so far as we can judge from Pepys's method of referring to her, Moll Davis must have been at this time quite a child; and it is not till more than three years later that he alludes to her connection with the king. On January 11, 1668, he relates

that Mrs. Knipp told him "how Miss Davis is for certain going away from the Duke's House, the King being in love with her; and a house is taken for her, and furnishing; and she hath a ring given her already worth 600*l.* . . . I am sorry for it, and can hope for no good to the State from having a Prince so devoted to his pleasure." It will be noticed that, even in 1668, Pepys says, "Miss" Davis, showing that she was still quite a young girl. It is probable that Downes is thinking of some revival of the play about 1667.

Among the other pieces produced about this time at the Duke's House were few of which modern readers know more than the name. Perhaps the most notable was *The Duchess of Malfy*, John Webster's powerful tragedy, in which Betterton as Bosola, and Harris as Duke Ferdinand, specially distinguished themselves, according to Downes; while Pepys, who saw the play on September 30, 1662, singles out for praise Betterton and Ianthe* [Mrs. Betterton], who performed to admiration. Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman Street*, in which Betterton played Colonel Jolly, was one of the successes of the period, although it was felt that the characters of the Cutter and Captain Worm, played by Underhill and Sandford, were not a little injurious to the indigent Cavalier officers who frequented the town. *The Villain*, a tragedy by Major Thomas Porter, was another great success. Pepys had his expectation excited regarding it by young Killigrew, who commended it "as if there never had been any such play come upon the stage." Pepys promptly went (October 20, 1662) to see this wonderful play, "but whether it was in over-expecting, or what, I know not; but I was never less pleased with a play in

* Pepys frequently calls Mrs. Betterton Ianthe, from her famous acting of the character of that name in Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes*.

my life. Though there was good singing and dancing, yet no fancy in the play." Malignii, the Villain, was acted by Sandford, whose qualifications for the part are thus amusingly stated by Anthony Aston—

"Mr. *Sandford*, although not usually deem'd an Actor of the first Rank, yet the Characters allotted him were such, that none besides, then, or since, ever topp'd ; for his Figure, which was diminutive and mean, (being Round-shoulder'd, Meagre-fac'd, Spindle-shank'd, Splay-footed, with a sour Countenance, and long lean Arms) render'd him a proper Person to discharge *Jago*, *Foresight*, and *Mal'ignij*, in the VILLAIN.—This Person acted strongly with his Face,—and (as King *Charles* said) was the best *Villain* in the World."

Yet the king on another occasion expressed his dissatisfaction with the practice of making up stage-villains after the fashion which Anthony Aston approves. The play was *Macbeth*, and when the swarthy and dark-visaged Charles saw the two Murderers as black of complexion as he himself was, he turned to those around him and said, "Pray, what is the meaning that we never see a rogue in a play, but, odsfish ! they always clap him on a black perriwig, when it is well known one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one?"—an allusion, I suppose, to the Earl of Shaftesbury. But Sandford was the accepted villain of the period, and, according to Cibber, the public had strenuous objections to consider him in any other light. Colley tells us that a new author wrote a play, in which Sandford acted the part of an honest man. The audience sat through three or four acts in keen expectation of the trouble in which the *dramatis personæ* would be involved through the well-dissembled villainy of Sandford ; but when they found that the play took quite another turn, and that he was, after all, an honest man, they fairly damned the piece,

"as if the author had impos'd upon them the most frontless or incredible absurdity."

In *The Villain* Betterton played Brisac, not a first-rate character; and he was even less fortunate in Sir George Etherege's comedy of *Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, though the play itself was brilliantly successful. It was particularly well acted, especially by Nokes as Sir Nicholas Cully, Harris as Sir Frederick Frollick, Price as Dufoy, and Mrs. Long as Widow Rich. Downes bursts into verse in his enthusiasm over these impersonations—

"Sir Nich'las, Sir Fred'rick; Widow and Dufoy,
Were not by any so well done, Mafoy."

He adds that the "clean and well performance" of this piece got the company more reputation and profit than any preceding comedy, one thousand pounds being taken at it in a month. Yet Pepys, who saw it on January 4, 1665, was not specially struck by it. He allows that it is a very merry play, but adds that it is "only so by gesture, not wit at all, which methinks is beneath the house." Betterton played the serious hero of the piece, one Lord Beauford, and Mrs. Betterton played Graciana, the serious heroine. It is not surprising that neither they nor any of the tragic members of the cast are singled out for praise by Downes, for it would be impossible for any actor to excite the interest of an audience in such hopelessly dismal characters. To my thinking *The Comical Revenge* is a very feeble production both in its serious and comic elements.

Such were the principal plays in which Betterton appeared between 1661 and June, 1665, on the 5th of which month an edict was issued from the Lord Chamberlain's office stopping all plays on account of the Plague.

During these five years the struggle between the opposing companies seems to have been carried on with fairly equal fortune. Each had its devoted adherents. Killigrew's company, of course, had its keenest supporters among the older playgoers, while the younger generation were all for Betterton. For instance, Downes, the prompter, who was probably a few years younger than his idol, was a devout Bettertonian; and Pepys, a couple of years older than the great actor, was equally enthusiastic. To Pepys, Betterton is "the best actor in the world," and his Hamlet is "the best part that ever man acted." Colley Cibber, many years after, wrote, "I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfy'd." On the other hand, James Wright, barrister-at-law, in his rare pamphlet, *Historia Histrionica*, published in 1699, enthusiastically champions the old school, making the two Cavaliers who take part in the dialogue speak thus—

"LOVEWIT. But in my Opinion, they [the plays of the Restoration period] are all of 'em (some few excepted) as much inferior to those of former Times, as the Actors now in being (generally speaking) are, compared to *Hart, Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Clun*, and *Shatterel*; for I can reach no farther backward.

"TRUEMAN. I can; and dare assure you, if my Fancy and Memory are not partial (for Men of my Age are apt to be over indulgent to the Thoughts of their youthful Days), I say the Actors that I have seen before the Wars, *Lowin, Tayler, Pollard*, and some others, were almost as far beyond *Hart* and his Company, as those were beyond these now in being."

Thomas Rymer is another believer in the older actors. In his *Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd and Examin'd*

he takes Hart and Mohun as the representative players. He calls them the Roscius and Æsopus of the age, and seems sublimely unconscious that such a person as Betterton had any existence. This, however, I should take as a proof that Betterton was high in general estimation at the time, for Mr. Rymer was one of those extremely superior persons who are always in opposition to anything that is popular and successful.

Against these supporters of the old school may be set the opinion of Pepys, who considered not only Betterton, but the Duke's players in general, infinitely superior to their rivals. They are, he notes on one occasion, "in all particulars better than at the other house;" and, writing of the King's company, he notes that he is "quite out of opinion of any of their actings but Lacy's, compared with the other house." On one occasion he relieves his soul in the following strong terms:—"The play (*Love in a Maze*) is pretty good, but the life of the play is Lacy's part, the clown, which is most admirable; but for the rest, which are counted old and excellent actors, in my life I never heard both men and women so ill pronounce their parts."

Regarding the plays acted by the old actors we have few particulars. Downes being prompter to Betterton's company, his knowledge of their rivals' proceedings was derived from Charles Booth, prompter to the King's Theatre, and he apologizes in his preface for its incompleteness. Pepys was a very frequent attender at the King's House; but, even combining his account with that of Downes, we get little real information as to the theatre or the actors.

As has already been mentioned, this company commenced acting at the theatre in Vere Street, Clare Market, which had formerly been Gibbon's Tennis

Court.* But this was, no doubt, too small for their requirements, especially as the introduction of scenery must have become a necessity in order to compete with their rivals. In December, 1661, accordingly, we find Killigrew making arrangements to obtain a more commodious playhouse. He seems to have associated with himself Sir Robert Howard, the dramatist, who probably advanced money to help the manager's necessities; and he also made his principal actors shareholders. The ground which the associated actors and managers procured for their theatre was the historical ground of the English drama, the site of the present Drury Lane theatre. From the Earl of Bedford they acquired a lease for forty-one years of the piece or parcel of ground situate in the parishes of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and St. Paul's, Covent Garden, known by the name of the Riding Yard. Its dimensions were—in length, from east to west, one hundred and twelve feet; in breadth, at the east end fifty-nine feet, and at the west end fifty-eight feet. For this an annual rent of fifty pounds was to be paid, and Killigrew and his partners covenanted to spend fifteen hundred pounds on building the house. Pepys saw the outside of the new theatre on February 6, 1663. "To Lincoln's Inn Fields; and it being too soon to go to dinner, I walked up and down, and looked upon the outside of the new theatre building in Covent Garden, which will be very fine." When it was opened Pepys found it "made with extraordinary good convenience." Yet it was not without serious faults, he considered, for the passages giving entrance to the pit were too narrow,

* Gibbon's Tennis Court was situated in Bear Yard, Vere Street. It was afterwards used as a carpenter's shop, then as a slaughter-house, and was destroyed by fire on September 17, 1809 (Julian Marshall's *Annals of Tennis*).

and the distance between the stage and the boxes so great that it was questionable if the occupants of the latter would hear what was said on the stage. The music, too, was more or less inaudible, the orchestra being now, for the first time apparently, placed in something like the modern position, that is, in front of, and partly under, the stage.

The date given by Downes as that on which Killigrew opened his new theatre in Drury Lane has hitherto been accepted without question by all stage historians. The old prompter says, "The Company being thus Compleat, they open'd the New Theatre in *Drury-Lane*, on *Thursday* in *Easter Week*, being the *8th* Day of *April*, 1663, With *The Humorous Lieutenant*." But I doubt if this is accurate, and that in spite of a play-bill which has frequently been published as being that for the opening day of Killigrew's theatre.* Pepys explicitly states, on May 8, 1663, that he took his wife to the "Theatre Royall, being the second day of its being opened." He had been at the King's House on the 22nd of the pre-

* The following is a copy of the play-bill in question :—

"By His Majesty's Company of Comedians
At the New Theatre in Drury Lane,
This day being THURSDAY, April 8, 1663, will be acted
A Comedy called

THE HUMOROUS LIEUTENANT.

The King	...	...	...	MR. WINTERSHAL.
Demetrius	...	...	...	MR. HART.
Seleucus	...	...	...	MR. BURT.
Leontius	...	...	...	MAJOR MOHUN.
Lieutenant	...	...	...	MR. CLUN.
Celia	...	...	...	MRS. MARSHALL.

The play will begin at three o'clock exactly.

Boxes, 4s. ; Pit, 2s. 6d. ; Middle Gallery, 1s. 6d. ;
Upper Gallery, 1s."

vious month, and they had obviously been then in their old theatre, for he makes no remark about the house, which he elaborately describes on May 8. I thus have little hesitation in asserting that Killigrew opened his theatre on Thursday, May 7, 1663. At any rate, if I am wrong, Downes and his followers are not right, for April 8, 1663, was not Thursday in Easter week, and in point of fact was not a Thursday at all, but a Wednesday; which, I am afraid, stamps the play-bill I have quoted as a not very astute forgery.

After the opening of the new theatre, the company was joined by Joseph Haynes, Griffin, Cardell Goodman, Lyddoll, Charleton, Sherly, Beeston. Of these, the first three became notable actors; of the others we know little or nothing, the only character of importance for which we find any of them cast being Jerry Blackacre in Wycherley's *Plain Dealer*, which was played by Charleton.

The older actors, strangely enough, do not seem to have been as partial to Shakespeare's plays as were their younger competitors. Before 1665 Pepys records the production of only four of these—*Othello*, *The Merry Wives*, *Henry IV.*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of *Othello* he seems to have approved, for he gives no criticism of the play, merely remarking (October 11, 1660) that it was well done. On this occasion Burt acted the Moor, and that with such effect that a very pretty lady who sat beside Mr. Pepys "called out, to see Desdemona smothered." When our diarist again saw *Othello*, on February 7, 1669, it was but ill acted in most parts. Burt was not so good as he used to be; Mohun, very much to Pepys's surprise, was not nearly so effective in Iago as Clun had been; while the successor of Hart in the character of Cassio was not a

success. Clun, who was esteemed so highly in Iago, was one of the best actors of the King's company. His acting, however, did not long delight Mr. Pepys and his contemporaries, for on a summer night in 1664, the unfortunate actor, riding home to his country house at Kentish Town, was "robbed and most inhumanly killed." He had been spending the evening in jovial society, and was no doubt a little elevated. Near "Tatnam Court" he was set upon by robbers, who wounded him in the arm, bound him, and flung him into the ditch. Here the poor fellow, struggling to release himself, bled to death; and, says Mr. Pepys, "the house will have a great miss of him." Apparently it had, for in his famous characters, Iago and the Alchemist, his successors only made the public think of the superiority of the dead player. The cast of *Othello* which Downes gives must be that of a production of the piece subsequent to Clun's murder; for Mohun is the Iago, while Burt plays Othello; Hart, Cassio; Cartwright, Brabantio; and Beeston, Roderigo; Desdemona and Emilia are represented by Mrs. Hughs and Mrs. Rutter respectively.

Pepys saw *The Merry Wives of Windsor* on December 5, 1660, and was not at all satisfied with the acting: "the humours of the country gentleman and the French doctor very well done, but the rest but very poorly, and Sir J. Falstaffe as bad as any." Who played Shallow and Doctor Caius we do not know, but in all probability the representative of Falstaff was Cartwright. Again, on September 25, 1661, Pepys saw the play "ill done," and six years after (August 15, 1667) he notes a wholesale condemnation: "And so went to the King's, and there saw *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which did not please me at all, in no part of it."

A Midsummer Night's Dream, which Pepys saw on Michaelmas Day, 1662, received very short shrift. "We saw *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." We may guess that the play was produced for the sake of the show and spectacle that could be introduced into it; but we have no other record of this production, and can form no idea as to how it was cast and played.

Ben Jonson's plays were much more suited to the public taste at this time than Shakespeare's, and nearly all his best works were played by the King's company. *The Fox*, *The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist*, *Cataline's Conspiracy*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *The Devil's an Ass*, *Every Man in his Humour*, *Every Man out of his Humour*, and *Sejanus*, are catalogued by Downes, and he selects characters in these plays as the most famous parts of some of the King's actors. Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Brome, Webster, and Glapthorne were among the older dramatists affected by the King's company, while among the modern poets Dryden took the first place.

The edict stopping the performance of plays on account of the Plague remained in force for about a year and a half. At court, theatrical performances were resumed on October 11, 1666, but it was nearly the end of November before the public theatres were allowed to reopen. Pepys was deeply shocked at the resumption of theatricals before the Plague had completely ceased; and in chronicling the Thanksgiving Day for the cessation of the Plague (November 20, 1666), notes that it was generally said that the thanksgiving was hurried on before the scourge had entirely disappeared, simply to allow plays to be acted, which the bishops would not

permit so long as there were any sufferers from the "sickness." His first visit to a public playhouse was paid on December 7, and he was so uneasy in his mind as to the propriety of his conduct that he sat with his cloak about his face, and was in "mighty pain," lest he should be seen by anybody to be at a play. Acting of plays, he chronicles, had been resumed for about a fortnight.

Betterton's first part of importance after the reopening of the theatre was Richard III. in Caryl's tragedy of *The English Princess; or, The Death of Richard III.* This play was produced on March 7, 1667, and was considered by Mr. Pepys "a most sad, melancholy play, and pretty good; but nothing eminent in it, as some tragedys are." The day of its production was "reckoned by all people the coldest day that ever was remembered in England; and, God knows! coals at a very great price." But the cold did not infect the audience in the theatre, for the play was a great success, bringing profit to the company and reputation to the chief actors—Betterton; Harris, who played the Duke of Richmond; and Smith, who acted Sir William Stanley. We do not know whether Betterton had a part in the Duke of Newcastle's comedy, *The Humorous Lovers*, notable because of the odd conduct of the mad Duchess of Newcastle, who "at the end, made her respects to the players from her box, and did give them thanks;" and we have no information that he played any character of importance during this year, in the autumn of which he had a serious illness. We first hear of his indisposition on October 16, 1667, when Pepys, to his great disgust, found Young playing Macbeth. So far as we can gather from Pepys, the great actor's illness did not permit him to play again until the following July, on the 6th of which month our diarist, hearing from Harris that his favourite

had returned to the stage, hurried off to the Duke's Playhouse, and saw *Henry V.*, and "glad to see Betterton."

The year 1667 was an unfortunate one for the theatre. Twice at least edicts of suspension were issued, one of which silenced both theatres. A play by the Honourable Edward Howard was the cause of one of these tyrannical edicts. It was entitled *The Change of Crowns*, and in it was the part of a country gentleman, just come up to court, who, though the king was in the theatre, abused him and his courtiers for their venality, "with all the imaginable wit and plainness." Lacy, the king's pet actor, played this part, and the usually thick-skinned Charles was so infuriated at being abused to his face that he promptly had Lacy committed to prison, and forbade the company to act any more. But Mohun, who was highly esteemed by Charles, pleaded his comrades' cause so well that the order for suspension was rescinded, and, apparently, Lacy was released after a very brief confinement. On his return to the theatre he unfortunately met the author of the play which had been the cause of his incarceration, and answered the Honourable Ned's congratulations on his release by cursing him and his nonsensical play. Howard made some reply, and Lacy retorted that he was more a fool than a poet, to which Ned replied by slapping the actor's face with his glove. Lacy, having a cane in his hand, brought it sharply over the dramatist's head, and the bystanders all expected to see the Honourable Ned run the actor through the body, he being, as Mr. Pepys puts it, "too mean a fellow to fight with." But no such violent measures were taken; the dramatist did nothing but complain to the king of the actor's misconduct; the theatre was closed by royal command; and poor Lacy apparently had a longer spell of imprisonment. The gentry rejoiced much at this

snub to the actors, who were getting too high and insolent—a complaint made against them as early as February, 1661, when Pepys notes, “Besides, I see the gallants do begin to be tyred with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown very proud and rich.”

This order for silence lasted about ten days, but a month or two later a much more serious suspension was enforced, of which, however, we know nothing further than that Pepys records that July 20 was the first day on which the King’s or the Duke’s company had performed for a month or six weeks.

In April, 1668, while Betterton was absent from the stage, his manager, Sir William Davenant, died. Although we find little mention of Davenant’s interference in the management of the theatre, there is no ground for doubt that he exercised full control over his company, and was the moving spirit in many of the advances which were made in the theatrical art. He seems to have been a thoroughly practical manager, with a perfect knowledge of stage conditions and necessities, as well as considerable ability as a dramatist. His chief service to the stage was the introduction of scenery, but he is also credited with others in a poem quoted by Richard Flecknoe in his attack on Davenant, entitled *Sir William D’Avenant’s Voyage to the other World, with his Adventure in the Poets’ Elizium*—

“Now Davenant’s dead the stage will mourn,
And all to barbarism turn ;
Since he it was, this later age,
Who chiefly civiliz’d the stage.

“Great was his wit, his fancy great,
As e’re was any poet’s yet ;

And more advantage none e'er made
O' th' wit and fancy which he had.

"Not onely Dedalus' art he knew,
But even Prometheus's too ;
And living machins made of men,
As well as dead ones, for the scene.

"And if the stage or theatre be
A little world, 'twas chiefly he,
That, Atlas-like, supported it
By force of industry and wit.

"All this, and more, he did beside,
Which having perfected, he dy'd :
If he may properly be said
To die, whose fame will ne'er be dead."

One thing that can be said in Davenant's praise is that he appears to have lived in amity with the company under his control. Between Killigrew and his players there were continual quarrels, and not infrequently the Lord Chamberlain was obliged to intervene in their disputes. But Davenant and his actors needed no such interference, and when the manager died his whole company attended his funeral. That indefatigable sight-seer, Pepys, did not miss the chance of so interesting a spectacle as the congregation of so many notable artists, and he relates how he hung about to see the show. "1668, April 9th. I up and down to the Duke of York's Playhouse, there to see, which I did, Sir W. Davenant's corps carried out towards Westminster, there to be buried. Here were many coaches and six horses, and many hacknies, that made it look, methought, as if it were the burial of a poor poet." Davenant's body was not, I need scarcely say, carried out from the theatre, as Pepys might be

supposed to imply, but from his lodging, which immediately adjoined the Duke's Playhouse.

At his death his property in the theatre was vested in his widow, Lady Davenant, for whom her son, Dr. Charles Davenant, acted. This young gentleman, who was said by old Aubrey to inherit "his father's beauty and phancy," was well known in later years as a lawyer and politician. He had, moreover, theatrical leanings, and wrote a play called *Circe*. With him were associated Betterton and Harris, who, no doubt, had control of the purely artistic side of the business.

During this year we have no record of any new character played by Betterton, though we may certainly assume that he acted in the revival of William Habington's tragi-comedy of *The Queen of Arragon*, at which Pepys was so surprised and delighted. It was so good that the diarist was astonished at it, and wondered where it had lain asleep all this while, that he had never heard of it before. But we know that about 1669 or 1670 Betterton made a great success in the part of Sir Solomon Single, in Carrol's comedy of *Sir Solomon; or, The Cautious Coxcomb*, giving thereby a proof of his great versatility; for Sir Solomon is a comedy part, and quite out of his usual line. It is, as Genest states, a part of the class played by Downton and Munden. It was in this play that Nokes caused the king and court to roar with laughter at an exhibition of bad taste that is almost incredible. The English court travelled down in May, 1670, to Dover, there to meet the king's sister, the Duchess of Orleans. The players were ordered to attend the king, and one of the pieces chosen was this comedy, *Sir Solomon*. Now, the French court then wore exceedingly short, laced coats, with broad waist-belts, and Nokes, who played the foolish knight, Sir Arthur Addle, dressed the part in deliberate

burlesque of the French fashion. To make the parody more pointed, the Duke of Monmouth gave Nokes his sword and belt, and buckled it on himself, so that, as Downes puts it, "Mr. Nokes lookt more like a Drest up Ape than a Sir *Arthur* : Which upon his first Entrance on the Stage, put the King and Court to an excessive Laughter ; at which the *French* look'd very Shaggrin, to see themselves Ap'd by such a Buffoon as Sir *Arthur* : Mr. *Nokes* kept the Duke's Sword to his Dying Day."

It is difficult to imagine gentlemen countenancing such an outrage on their guests, especially gentlemen so jealous of their own dignity as these courtiers were. Sir Charles Sedley, for instance, conceiving himself abused by Kynaston, took a very summary revenge. The actor bore a great resemblance to the dissolute baronet, and did all in his power to emphasize the likeness by dressing in the same style. Pepys says that the chief provocation was that Kynaston acted a part in *The Heiress*, a play of which we know nothing, "in abuse to Sir Charles Sedley ;" but another account states that the offence was simply Kynaston's wearing a suit of laced clothes exactly similar to Sedley's. At any rate, Sedley hired several braves, who accosted Kynaston in the Park, picked a quarrel with him under the pretence that he was Sir Charles Sedley, and beat him unmercifully. The actor protested that they had mistaken their man, but they redoubled their blows because of what they affected to consider his bare-faced lying. As a result, the poor player was confined to his bed for some days, and his part in *The Heiress* was read by Beeston ; regarding which Pepys has a delightful note—"But it was pleasant to see Beeston come in with others, supposing it to be dark, and yet he is forced to read his part by the light of the candles : and this I ob-

serving to a gentleman that sat by me, he was mightily pleased therewith, and spread it up and down."

The year 1670 was more notable for a political occurrence connected with the stage than for any really theatrical event. This was the attack made on Sir John Coventry, a Member of Parliament, in revenge for a jest made by him at the king's expense in the House of Commons. It was proposed in Parliament that a tax should be imposed on the playhouses—a proceeding which was naturally violently opposed by the court party. They argued that the actors were the king's servants, and a part of his pleasure; whereon Coventry jestingly asked whether the king's pleasure lay among the men or women that acted. For this thoughtless speech the king took terrible revenge. On the night of December 21, 1670, Coventry was waylaid by a party of the Guards, Sir Thomas Sandys, O'Bryan, and others, who, after a brave resistance, overcame and disarmed him, cut his nose to the bone, and left him. This outrage was executed by special order of the Duke of Monmouth, at the instigation of the king himself, and was bitterly resented by the House of Commons, who passed a bill of banishment against the offenders, and inserted in it a clause that the king should not have the power to pardon the criminals—thus depriving the king of a part of his prerogative. Andrew Marvell, in his poem of "Royal Resolutions," has some vigorous verses on the subject—

"And whate'er it cost me, I'll have a French Whore,
As bold as Alice Pierce, and as fair as Jane Shore,
And when I am weary of her, I'll have more.
Which if any bold Commoner dare to oppose,
I'll order my Bravo's to cut off his Nose,
Tho' for't I a branch of Prerogative lose.

I'll wholly abandon all publick Affairs,
 And pass all my time with Buffoons and Players,
 And santer to Nelly when I should be at Prayers." *

And in the same collection from which the above is quoted, there is "A Ballad, call'd *The Hay-market Hectors*," referring to the occurrence, of which the following is a verse :—

"Beware all ye Parliamenteers,
 How each of his Voice disposes :
Bab May in the Commons, *C. Rex* in the Peers,
 Sit telling your Fates on your Noses ;
 And decide, at the mention of every Slut,
 Whose Nose shall continue, and whose shall be cut." †

The well-known "Coventry Act" was passed in consequence of this outrage.

According to some authorities, the popularity of Betterton and his fellow-players was by this time very much eclipsed by the superior ability of the King's company, and they therefore tried what the attraction of a new and gorgeous theatre would do. The site chosen was in Salisbury Court, ‡ Fleet Street, where a magnificent building was erected. Both in its exterior and interior it was much finer than any of its predecessors, and the prologues and epilogues spoken at the rival theatre in Drury Lane contained many sneering references to its grandeur. In one of Dryden's prologues, spoken at the King's House, he writes—

"So we expect the lovers, braves, and wits ;
 The gaudy house with scenes will serve for cits ;"

* See *Poems on Affairs of State*, vol. i. (1703), p. 252.

† Ibid., vol. iii. (1704), p. 69.

‡ Being built on ground which had once been the Earl of Dorset's garden, it was commonly known as the theatre in Dorset Garden. The City gas-works, I believe, now occupy the site.

and in another he returns to the charge, identifying the citizens with the Dorset Garden Theatre, which was, of course, situated much nearer the city than Drury Lane. The lines are—

“Our city friends so far will hardly come,
They can take up with pleasures nearer home ;
And see gay shows, and gaudy scenes, elsewhere ;
For we presume they seldom come to hear.”

Of the appearance of this playhouse we know more than we do of any other old theatre, both its exterior and interior being represented in drawings published in Elkanah Settle's tragedy of *The Empress of Morocco*, which was produced at the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Garden in 1673. The first plate shows the front elevation of the theatre, an elegant and striking design in the Italian fashion. There is a colonnade running the entire breadth of the building, under which is a large double door reached by circular steps. The upper part of the theatre is highly ornamental, festoons of carved flowers decorating panels above and between the windows, a balustrade surmounted by statues running along the top of the main building, while the whole is surmounted by a striking tower and cupola. The back of the theatre was close to the river, and there was a landing-place for those who came by water. The designer is said to have been Sir Christopher Wren. The magnificent carvings in the interior of the house were by Grinling Gibbons ; and there were also portraits, on panels, no doubt, of the principal dramatists, as we learn from one of Dryden's unfriendly addresses, where he happily makes capital for his friends out of their opponents' splendour—

“Though in their House the Poets' Heads appear,
We hope we may presume their Wits are here.”

The proscenium was a most elaborate and beautiful structure. All round it, round the doors of entrance, round the balconies above the doors, and round the panels which were over the balconies, ran beautiful carved work by Gibbons, representing fruits and flowers, exquisite in effect even in the rough copper-plates which illustrate Settle's tragedy. At the top, the proscenium swept out in graceful curves from the two sides, forming a sort of sounding-board* over the actors' heads. On this projecting portion were the Duke's coat of arms supported by two cherubs, gigantic figures of Comedy and Tragedy, and paintings of various musical instruments.

In this magnificent building every opportunity was afforded for elaborate scenery and stage appointments, and it is recorded that Betterton invented new machines and otherwise developed materially the spectacular resources of the stage. He is said to have visited Paris, by the special command of the king, in order to observe how the English theatre could be improved in the matter of scenery and decorations. If he made such a journey it was most probably about this time.

The expense of this splendid building is said to have been over five thousand pounds, an enormous sum in those days, and the money was raised by subscription, the subscribers or shareholders being called "Adventurers." We learn from the prologue spoken on the opening day that these adventurers were extremely anxious about the success of their new venture. The lines referring to them are—

* This use of the proscenium was further developed on some occasions. Thus we read that when the music to Congreve's masque, *The Judgment of Paris*, was played at this theatre in 1701, "the front of the stage was all built into a concave with deal boards; all which was faced with tin, to increase and throw forward the sound."

“But hold ! I in this business may proceed too far,
 And raise a storm against our theatre,
 And then what would the wise adventurers say
 Who are in a much greater fright to-day
 Than ever poet was about his play ?”

The new theatre was opened on November 9, 1671, with Dryden's comedy of *Sir Martin Marrall*, “which continu'd *Acting* 3 Days together, with a full audience each Day; notwithstanding it had been *Acted* 30 Days before in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, and above 4 times at Court.” In this Betterton had no part, and in *Love in a Tub*, which succeeded it, his part, as has already been mentioned, was a very poor one. His first original character in the new theatre was Charles, King of France, in Crown's *Charles VIII.*, a robustious tragedy, which, in spite of being “all new cloath'd, yet lasted but 6 Days together.”

Somewhere about this time the Duke's company were temporarily strengthened by the accession of the notorious Jo Haynes, one of the chief low comedians of the period, who, having offended Hart, was dismissed from the King's company. Jo was a buffoon and *farceur* of the first water, and the offence which he gave to Hart is a characteristic piece of misconduct. It is thus related in that very scarce little volume, *The Life of the late Famous Comedian, Jo Hayns*—

“There happened to be one night a play acted, called *Catiline's Conspiracy*, wherein there was wanting a great number of senators. Now Mr. Hart being chief of the house, would oblige Jo to dress for one of these senators, although Jo's salary, being then 50s. per week, freed him from any such obligation. But Mr. Hart, as I said before, being sole governor of the playhouse, and at a small variance with Jo, commands it, and the other must obey.

“Jo being vexed at the slight Mr. Hart had put on him,

found out this method of being revenged on him. He gets a Scaramouch dress, a large full ruff, makes himself whiskers from ear to ear, puts on his head a long Merry-Andrew's cap, a short pipe in his mouth, a little three-legged stool in his hand ; and in this manner follows Mr. Hart on the stage, sets himself down behind him, and begins to smoke his pipe, laugh, and point at him. Which comical figure put all the house in an uproar, some laughing, some clapping, and some hollowing. Now Mr. Hart, as those who knew him can aver, was a man of that exactness and grandeur on the stage, that, let what would happen, he'd never discompose himself, or mind anything but what he then represented ; and had a scene fallen behind him, he would not at that time look back, to have seen what was the matter ; which Jo knowing, remained still smoking. The audience continued laughing, Mr. Hart acting, and wondering at this unusual occasion of their mirth ; sometimes thinking it some disturbance in the house, again that it might be something amiss in his dress : at last turning himself toward the scenes, he discovered Jo in the aforesaid posture ; whereupon he immediately goes off the stage, swearing he would never set foot on it again, unless Jo was immediately turned out of doors, which was no sooner spoke, but put in practice."

Old Anthony Aston, who seems to have known Jo well, gives a very entertaining account of his pranks, of which I will quote that part which is quotable. Aston's last anecdote is much too strong for modern palates.

"JOE HAINES is more remarkable for the witty, tho' wicked, Pranks he play'd, and for his Prologues and Epilogues, than for Acting.—He was, at first, a Dancer.—After he had made his Tour of *France*, he narrowly escaped being seiz'd, and sent to the *Bastile*, for personating an *English* Peer, and running 3000 Livres in Debt in *Paris* ; but, happily landing at *Dover*, he went to *London*, where in *Bartholomew-Fair*, he set up a Droll-Booth, and acted a new Droll, call'd, *The Whore of Babylon, the Devil, and the Pope*. This was in the first Year of King *James II.* when *Joe* was sent for,

and roundly admonish'd, by Judge *Pollixfen* for it. *Joe* reply'd; *That he did it in Respect to his Holiness; for, whereas many ignorant People believed the Pope to be a Beast, he shew'd him to be a fine, comely old Gentleman, as he was; not with Seven Heads, and Ten Horns, as the Scotch Parsons describe him.* However, this Affair spoil'd *Joe's* expiring Credit; for next Morning, a Couple of Bailiffs seiz'd him in an Action of 20*l.* as the Bishop of *Ely* was passing by in his Coach.—Quoth *Joe* to the Bailiffs,—*Gentlemen, here's my Cousin, the Bishop of Ely, going into his House; let me but speak to him, and he'll pay the Debt and Charges.* The Bailiffs thought they might venture that, as they were within three or four Yards of him. So, up goes *Joe* to the Coach, pulling off his Hat, and got close to it. The Bishop order'd the Coach to stop, whilst *Joe* (close to his Ear) said softly, *My Lord, here are two poor Men, who have such great Scruples of Conscience, that, I fear, they'll hang themselves.*—Very well, said the Bishop. So, calling to the Bailiffs, he said, *You two Men, come to me To-morrow Morning, and I'll satisfy you.* The Men bow'd, and went away. *Joe* (hugging himself with his fallacious Device) went also his Way. In the Morning, the Bailiffs (expecting the Debt and Charges) repair'd to the Bishop's; where being introduced,—Well, said the Bishop, *what are your Scruples of Conscience?*—*Scruples!* (said the Bailiffs) *we have no Scruples: We are Bailiffs, my Lord, who, Yesterday, arrested your Cousin, Joe Haines, for 20*l.* Your Lordship promised to satisfy us To-day, and we hope your Lordship will be as good as your Word.*—The Bishop, reflecting that his Honour and Name would be expos'd, (if he complied not) paid the Debt and Charges."

During Haines's sojourn with Betterton and his companions he played the characters of the French Master in Ravenscroft's *Citizen turn'd Gentleman*, and Plot in the Earl of Orrery's comedy of *Mr. Anthony*. However, neither of these is a part of first performance, and Jo very soon took himself and his pranks back to the King's company, who had by this time been forced to change

their scene of action. The cause of their removal was a fire, which utterly destroyed the Theatre Royal, on January 25, 1672. The houseless actors were glad to take refuge in the old theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields which the Duke's company had just vacated, where they began to play on February 26, 1672, and where they remained till their new theatre in Drury Lane was ready, in March, 1674.

In spite of the high opinion which Pepys and Downes continually express regarding Betterton, there seems strong reason to suppose that the King's company continued to be more attractive than the Duke's, at least so long as Hart and Mohun were in the full glory of their powers. Yet this seems strange when we recall that Betterton, Harris, Smith, and Sandford were among the younger company. It is conceivable that the conjunction of Hart, Mohun, and Kynaston was stronger than any that the others could bring forward. Betterton was no doubt quite as strong as any single one of his opponents, but Harris probably was on a lower level, in tragedy at least, than the chiefs of the rival company; and, while we have every reason to believe that Hart and Mohun were bosom friends, we know that there was an amount of rivalry between Betterton and Harris which might very likely prevent their playing perfectly together. Whatever the cause, it seems pretty certain that the Duke's company were sorely put to it to maintain a successful fight. They removed, as we have seen, to a gorgeous new theatre, which, they expected, and their opponents certainly seemed to fear, would give them a great advantage in the struggle. Then fate struck in on their side, burning their rivals out of their own house, and sending them to a deserted old playhouse, worn and ill furnished. Yet with all these disadvantages, the older

actors held their own, and the younger company tried another plan to attract the town. This was the production of operas.

An opera is described by Dryden as, strictly speaking, "a poetical tale, or fiction, represented by vocal and instrumental music, adorned with scenes, machines, and dancing;" which is very much how we should describe an opera now. But this academical description was not the popular idea of an opera, which was rather founded on such productions as Dryden and Davenant's *Tempest*. This Dryden describes as "a tragedy mixed with opera; or a drama written in blank verse, adorned with scenes, machines, songs and dances, so that the fable of it is all spoken and acted by the best of the Comedians; the other part of the entertainment to be performed by the singers and dancers." Next to the music, the "machines" seem to have been esteemed the most essential characteristic of operas, for, as Genest points out, Downes considers machinery so essential to an opera, that he calls the *Lancashire Witches* a kind of opera, because there were machines for the witches. *Macbeth*, too, was described by the old prompter as "in the nature of an opera," although there was probably little more music and dancing in it than in "revivals" of *Macbeth* with Locke's music, such as all of us have seen within a very few years. The chief of these exotic entertainments were Shadwell's perversion of *The Tempest*, in which the principal effect of the "machines" was the flying away of a table laid with fruits and sweetmeats just as Trinculo and his companions were going to dinner; the same writer's *Psyche*, which cost over eight hundred pounds to mount; and Dr. Charles Davenant's *Circe*, the music to which was composed by Banister. In the last mentioned the dramatic part was

in good hands, Orestes being played by Betterton; Pylades, by Williams; Ithacus, by Smith; Thoas, by Harris; Iphigenia, by Mrs. Betterton.

Before the production of *The Tempest*, one of Aphra Behn's plays, *The Forced Marriage*, was played, and was tolerably successful. It is interesting to us solely from the fact that Otway made his first, and last, appearance on the stage in it. His fate as an actor is so quaintly related by Downes that it would be unfeeling to tell the incident in any but the prompter's very words. "Note," he begins, "In this play, Mr. Otway the poet having an inclination to turn actor; Mrs. Behn gave him the King in this play, for a probation part, but he being not us'd to the stage; the full house put him to such a sweat and tremendous Agony, being dash't, spoilt him for an actor." About the same time another poet met with a similar mischance. This was poor Nat Lee, who, says Downes, "had the same fate in acting Duncan in *Macbeth*, ruin'd him for an actor too." This failure of Lee's is curious, because he was so admirable an elocutionist that, as Cibber records, Mohun, while Lee was reading a play one day at rehearsal, threw down his part in despair, exclaiming, "Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it?"

As actors, Otway and Lee were thus no advantage to the Duke's company, which began to need recruits. Death had carried off Price, Lovel, Lilliston, Robert Nokes, Mosely, and others; while Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Davies, and Mrs. Jennings, in the words of Downes, "by force of Love were Erept the Stage." In place of these came Anthony Leigh, the most famous of the actors who bore that surname; Gillow, Jevon, and Williams; Mrs. Barry—the great Mrs. Barry—Mrs. Currer, Mrs. Butler, and others of less importance. No doubt the acquisition

of such admirable artists as Leigh and Mrs. Barry did much to support the reputation of the younger company, who within the next few years caught up and even passed their powerful rivals. To this result the excellence of many of the new plays which they produced must have contributed powerfully. Between 1676 and 1682 they played new pieces by Dryden, Etheredge, Otway, Lee, and Aphra Behn, many of which were among the different authors' masterpieces. Otway, who had just failed to aid the company in one capacity, supported it brilliantly in another. After an ineffectual attempt at soldiering, which followed his failure as an actor, Otway found his real vocation in writing for the stage. His comedies were conspicuously licentious even in such an age of license, but in pathetic tragedy he was undoubtedly a master. To Betterton his plays afforded a brilliant series of original characters, and we have pleasing proof that the great actor was grateful to the author who had given him so many opportunities of distinction. In *A Satyr upon the Poets, being a Translation out of the 7th Satyr of Juvenal*, there are the following lines :—

“ There was a time when Otway charm'd the Stage,
 Otway, the hope, the Sorrow of our age ;
 When the full pit with pleas'd attention hung,
 Wrapt with each accent from *Castalio's* Tongue.
 With what a laughter was his *Soldier* read !
 How mourn'd they when his *Jaffier* struck, and bled !
 Yet this best poet, tho' with so much ease,
 He never drew his pen but sure to please ;
 Tho' lightning were less lively than his wit,
 And thunder-claps less loud than those o' th' pit ;
 He had of's many wants much earlier dy'd,
 Had not kind Banker Betterton supply d,
 And took for pawn the embryo of a play,
 Till he could pay himself the next third day.’

The first character which Otway's plays afforded Betterton was not a good one, for the poet's *Alcibiades* is a very poor production ; but in *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain*, the actor had a powerful and effective part as King Philip II., and being well supported by Harris as Don John of Austria, Smith as the Prince of Spain, and Mrs. Mary Lee as the Queen, he won for the piece a striking success. It was played for ten days in succession, and brought more money than any preceding tragedy by a modern writer. Booth long afterwards related how Betterton informed him that *Don Carlos* was more applauded and drew better houses for many years than either *The Orphan* or *Venice Preserved*; and in Rochester's *Session of the Poets* the popularity of this play is coarsely alluded to—

“Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,
And swears, for Heroicks, he writes best of any.
Don Carlos his pockets so amply had filled,
That his mange was quite cur'd, and his lice were all killed.”

Titus and Berenice was the next of Otway's plays ; but Betterton did not increase his reputation much by this poor part of Titus. Next came a diverting but indecent comedy, *Friendship in Fashion*, which was very successful, and in which Betterton acted Goodvile, a married rake, on whom his wife takes revenge in kind. In this comedy occurs the character Malagene, which afforded Steele so apt a reference in the course of his quarrel with the Duke of Newcastle, the Lord Chamberlain who deprived him of his license. He refers to the duke's threat to ruin him, “which,” he adds, “is in a man of his circumstances against one in mine, as great as the humour of Malagene in the comedy, who values himself on his activity in tripping up cripples.” *Friendship in*

Fashion was followed by the famous tragedy of *The Orphan*, and by Otway's strange version, or rather perversion, of *Romeo and Juliet*, called *Caius Marius*, both of which were produced in 1680. On the merits and reputation of *The Orphan* it is unnecessary to enlarge. Dr. Johnson said of it that it was one of the few pieces that had kept the stage, and continued to please through all the vicissitudes of dramatic fashion; and we may add to this that it remained a stock play until tragedy went out of fashion. The hero, Castalio, was played by Betterton; Chamont, by Smith; Polydore, by Joseph Williams; and Monimia, by Mrs. Barry. All got great glory from the play, but Mrs. Barry in an especial degree. Downes says, "This and *Belvidera* in *Venice Preserved* . . . together with *Isabella* in the *Fatal Marriage*: these three parts gained her the name of Famous Mrs. Barry, both at Court and City; for when ever she acted any of those three parts, she forc'd tears from the eyes of her Auditory, especially those who have any sense of pity for the Distress't"—which is, after all, comparatively mild commendation.

Caius Marius did not afford much chance for Betterton to distinguish himself, but in Beaugard in *The Soldier's Fortune* he had a capital comedy part, and in Jaffier in *Venice Preserved* one of the most effective tragic parts ever written. In the former play Betterton was supported by Nokes as Sir David Duncie, Leigh as Sir Jolly Jumble, Smith as Courtine, and Mrs. Barry as Lady Duncie; while in the latter Smith played Pierre, Wiltshire, Renault; and Mrs. Barry, *Belvidera*.

Lee's contributions to the Duke's House were *Cæsar Borgia* and *Lucius Junius Brutus*, in which Betterton played the title-parts; *Theodosius*, in which Varanes, the Persian Prince, was Betterton's character; and *Ædipus*,

which was written in conjunction with Dryden, and was admirably acted, especially by Betterton and his wife, who played Œdipus and Jocasta. Dryden, most of whose plays were given to the other company, contributed his alteration of *Troilus and Cressida*, and his famous comedy of *The Spanish Friar*, to the Duke's company. Betterton played Troilus, and spoke the prologue of the play in the character of the Ghost of Shakespeare. In *The Spanish Friar* he played the principal serious part, Torrismond; in connection with which it is curious to recollect that in his later years he played the principal comedy character in the play, the Spanish Friar himself, of which Leigh was the original representative.

Among the important parts played by Betterton between 1676 and 1682, I may mention the delightful comedy character of Dorimant in Etheredge's *Man of the Mode*, Antony in Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Belville in Mrs. Behn's *Rover*, Timon in Shadwell's alteration of *Timon of Athens*, and King Lear in Nahum Tate's foolish perversion of Shakespeare's play.

CHAPTER V.

THOMAS BETTERTON (1682-1695).

NUMEROUS allusions by contemporary writers show clearly that before 1680 the stage had fallen into considerable disrepute. To this several causes had contributed. The condition of the country made it almost impossible that the theatre could be anything more than a resort of the thoughtless and dissipated. The disgraceful life of the king, who was shameless in his neglect of duty and in his indulgence of vice, kept the realm in a continual state of turbulence. The horrors of the Popish Plot were in full blast, and king and Parliament were at hopeless odds. No wonder, then, that thoughtful men had little inclination for the theatre, or that the class who sought amusement were debased and brutal in their tastes, and frivolous in their desires.

The sort of amusement which was most popular was, as might be expected, such as appealed to the eye rather than to the mind. Rope-walking, dancing, puppet-shows, were followed to the exclusion of plays, and such plays as were popular were mostly operas or farces, "full of inexplicable dumb shows and noise." Dryden, in his prologue to Tate's tragedy of *The Loyal General*, writes, in his usual outspoken style—

"The plays that take on our corrupted stage,
Methinks, resemble the distracted age ;
Noise, madness, all unreasonable things,
That strike at sense, as rebels do at kings.

They talk of fevers that infect the brains ;
But nonsense is the new disease that reigns.
Weak stomachs, with a long disease oppressed,
Cannot the cordials of strong wit digest ;
Therefore thin nourishment of farce ye choose,
Decoctions of a barley-water muse."

Of the two theatres, the King's House seems to have been the weaker. Being led by actors of the older generation, it naturally suffered more from the lapse of time than its younger rival. Its great leaders, Hart and Mohun, were now men well up in years, and seem to have been to some extent incapacitated for work by their age and infirmities before 1680 ; for they must have been the actors referred to in the following lines in the prologue to Crowne's *Ambitious Statesman*, which was produced by the older company in 1679 :—

"The Times Neglect, and Maladies have thrown
The two great Pillars of our Play-house down."

The King's actors seem, too, to have been divided against themselves. Curll, in his *History of the English Stage*, expressly mentions the feuds and animosities of the King's company ; and Cibber also refers to them, giving as their cause the intractability of Goodman, Clark, and the younger actors, who were eager to seize the parts for which they, no doubt, considered their seniors unfit. One company was thus in a condition of hopeless disorganization ; and although the internal affairs of the Duke's company appear to have been in a better state, they too felt the effect of the unsettled times in very much

diminished audiences. Under these circumstances, it was natural that steps should be taken to amalgamate the two competing houses. What form the negotiations took at first is not known, but we can guess, from after-events, that the Duke's company, powerful, well conducted, and comparatively prosperous, took the initiative, with the idea of absorbing a troublesome though weaker rival. The King's players appear to have realized that absorption in the Duke's company was by no means a desirable fate for them, and to have resisted it accordingly. But their opposition was made useless and their cause was betrayed by an agreement between Dr. Charles Davenant, Betterton, and Smith, as representatives of the Duke's company, and their own leaders, Hart and Kynaston. This extraordinary document, which is given by Gildon, in his *Life of Betterton*, appears to us, ignorant as we are of the precise circumstances, rather unfair and high-handed. By it Hart and Kynaston, in consideration of a payment of five shillings for every acting day, covenant to cease playing for the King's company. They also assign to Davenant, Betterton, and Smith all their interest in plays, books, clothes, and scenes in the King's Playhouse, and they undertake to do all in their power to bring about a union between the two companies.

Some of the points of this agreement are not very clear. For instance, it seems curious that Hart and Kynaston should be able to refrain from playing with their own company. It would naturally be supposed that, so long as they were sharers and members, they would be obliged to play such characters as were allotted to them. Then, again, it is difficult to see what value Hart's and Kynaston's shares in the plays, books, clothes, and scenes of the King's Theatre can have had to members of another company; except, perhaps, as a means of embarrassing

the deserted comedians. But, with all limitations, it is obvious that the agreement must have been fatal to the very existence of the older company, and, accordingly, the union of 1682 was consummated. Downes makes no allusion whatever to any trouble in the negotiation, and simply chronicles that the patentees united their patents. Cibber, who alludes to the dissensions, yet attributes the union to the influence of the king himself, who saw the failing audiences of both houses.

At the union the Duke's company removed from Dorset Garden to the smaller but better situated Theatre Royal; and Dorset Garden was afterwards only occasionally used, when specially elaborate productions demanded a huge stage. The amalgamated companies began operations on November 16, 1682, the prologue on opening the season being written by Dryden, and evidently spoken by one of the former Duke's company. After comparing the removal that had taken place to the emigrations to the American plantations, the poet alludes to the dissensions in the King's company which had led to the union—

“ The factious natives never could agree ;
But aiming, as they called it, to be free,
Those play-house Whigs set up for property.

“ Some say, they no obedience paid of late ;
But would new fears and jealousies create,
Till topsy-turvy they had turned the state.

“ Plain sense, without the talent of foretelling,
Might guess 'twould end in downright knocks and quelling ;
For seldom comes there better of rebelling.”

He next exults in the successful result of the Duke's players' tactics, and promises good entertainment—

"But since the victory with us remains,
You shall be called to twelve in all our gains,
If you'll not think us saucy for our pains.

"Old men shall have good old plays to delight them :
And you, fair ladies and gallants, that slight them,
We'll treat with good new plays, if our new wits can write
them."

Three great actors left the stage about the time of the union—Hart, Mohun, and Harris. Regarding the first of these, Downes writes, "Upon this Union, Mr. *Hart* being the Heart of the Company under Mr. *Killigrew's* Patent never *Acted* more, by reason of his Malady ; being Afflicted with the Stone and Gravel, of which he Dy'd some time after." Mohun's name occurs very seldom after the union, though he probably acted for some little time ; as Downes refers to him as being still a member of the company. Harris is not mentioned by Downes in connection with the union, and his name cannot be traced in any cast later than 1681, so that in all probability he died, or had retired, about 1682.

All these events materially improved Betterton's position on the stage. The retirement of his great rivals gave him the unquestioned lead of the company, and the first choice of characters in every play. With the union of the two companies came necessarily the abolition of all regulations as to the division of plays ; and Betterton had now the opportunity of playing the great characters which had before belonged to Hart and Mohun. It is, therefore, not surprising that for a considerable period much attention was bestowed upon the revival of famous old plays. To this the *genus irritabile vatum* naturally objected, and George Powell, in the preface to his *Treacherous Brothers* (1690), complains that "upon the

uniting of the two theatres, the reviveing of the old stock of plays so ingrost the study of the house, that the Poets lay dormant ; and a new play cou'd hardly get admittance, amongst the most precious pieces of antiquity that then waited to walk the stage." Betterton, in fact, having such parts as *Othello*, *Brutus*, and *Hotspur* thrown open to him, did not care to waste his time and his energy on Powell's *Menaphon*, or *Ithocles*, or *Orgillus*. Downes gives a list of the old plays which had been the property of Killigrew's company, and which were now revived, with Betterton, no doubt, in the chief characters. They were *Othello* ; Brome's *Jovial Crew* ; Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady* ; John Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* (in which Betterton acted Michael Perez), *Beggar's Bush*, *Rollo*, *Humorous Lieutenant*, and *Double Marriage* ; Wycherley's *Plain Dealer* ; Dryden's *Evening's Love* ; and Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*.

To this list must be added *Julius Cæsar*, in which Hart's character of Brutus became the property of Betterton. How he played this character we are told by Cibber.

"A farther Excellence in *Betterton* was, that he could vary his Spirit to the different Characters he acted. Those wild impatient Starts, that fierce and flashing Fire, which he threw into *Hotspur*, never came from the unruffled Temper of his *Brutus* (for I have more than once seen a *Brutus* as warm as *Hotspur*) when the *Betterton Brutus* was provok'd in his Dispute with *Cassius*, his Spirit flew only to his Eye ; his steady Look alone supply'd that Terror which he disdain'd an Intemperance in his Voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled Dignity of Contempt, like an unheeding Rock he repelled upon himself the Foam of *Cassius*. Perhaps the very Words of *Shakespear* will better let you into my Meaning :

*Must I give way and room to your rash Choler ?
Shall I be frighted when a Madman stares ?*

And a little after,

There is no Terror, Cassius, in your Looks ! &c.

Not but in some part of this Scene, where he reproaches *Cassius*, his Temper is not under this Suppression, but opens into that Warmth which becomes a man of virtue ; yet this is that *Hasty Spark* of Anger which *Brutus* himself endeavours to excuse."

Our quaint old friend, Anthony Aston, has one of his characteristic references to this performance. He is praising the naturalness and untutored force of *Verbruggen*, when playing *Cassius* to *Betterton's Brutus*. "Then," he exclaims, "you might behold the grand Contest, *viz.* whether Nature or Art excell'd—*Verbruggen* wild and untaught, or *Betterton* in the Trammels of Instruction."

Of his *Othello*, another character which Hart had played, we have a beautiful picture in the *Tatler*, where Steele, with exquisite art, paints such an *Othello* as seems almost beyond imagination perfect—

"I have hardly a notion that any performer of antiquity could surpass the action of Mr. Betterton in any of the occasions in which he has appeared on our stage. The wonderful agony which he appeared in, when he examined the circumstance of the handkerchief in *Othello* ; the mixture of love that intruded upon his mind upon the innocent answers *Desdemona* makes, betrayed in his gesture such a variety and vicissitude of passions, as would admonish a man to be afraid of his own heart, and perfectly convince him, that it is to stab it, to admit that worst of daggers, jealousy. Whoever reads in his closet this admirable scene, will find that he cannot, except he has as warm an imagination as Shakspeare himself, find any but dry, incoherent, and broken sentences ; but a reader that has seen Betterton act it, observes there could not be a word added ; that longer speech had been

unnatural, nay impossible, in *Othello's* circumstances. The charming passage in the same tragedy, where he tells the manner of winning the affection of his mistress, was urged with so moving and graceful an energy, that while I walked in the cloisters, I thought of him with the same concern as if I waited for the remains of a person who had in real life done all that I had seen him represent."

About this time, too, Betterton seems to have played his own productions pretty often, as we learn from the opening lines of *A Satyr on the Modern Translators*. By Mr. P—r, which run—

"Since the united cunning of the Stage
Has balk'd the hireling Drudges of the Age :
Since Betterton of late so thrifty's grown,
Revives old Plays, or wisely acts his own.

Those who with nine months' toil had spoil'd a Play,
In hope of eating at a full Third day

Have left Stage-practice."

Of these plays of Betterton's it is not necessary to say much. Downes mentions three of them as having been produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields about 1670—*The Woman made a Justice*, and *The Amorous Widow*, comedies, and *The Unjust Judge*, a tragedy. *The Amorous Widow* is founded on Molière's *George Dandin*; and *The Unjust Judge* is simply a version of Webster's *Appius and Virginia*, a story made familiar to us by Sheridan Knowles's well-known drama. *The Woman made a Justice* has not been printed, so that we do not know who played the various parts, but we know that, in *The Amorous Widow*, Betterton acted Lovemore, and, in *The Unjust Judge*, Virginius. He also turned Fletcher's *Prophetess* into an opera, and arranged the two parts of Shakespeare's *Henry IV.* for the stage. His adaptations

are skilful and workmanlike, showing great judgment and thorough knowledge of stage requirements, but the original passages contained in them have no particular merit. All his pieces were very successful.

The debased public taste and the unsettled condition of political affairs, to which I have already made reference, together contributed to the further lowering of the stage by making it a political battle-ground. In *A Lenten Prologue refus'd by the Players* (1682), the case is stated with much plainness—

“Our Prologue-wit grows flat : the Nap’s worn off ;
 And howsoe’er we turn and trim the Stuff,
 The Gloss is gone, that look’d at first so gaudy ;
 ’Tis now no jest to hear young girls talk b—y.
 But Plots and Parties give new matter birth ;
 And State-distractions serve you here for mirth !
 At England’s cost poets now purchase fame
 While factious heats destroy us, without shame
 These wanton Nero’s fiddle to the flame. }
 The Stage, like old Rump Pulpits, is become
 The Scene of News, a furious Party’s Drum.
 Here Poets beat their brains for Voluntiers,
 And take fast hold of Asses by their ears.”

Of these political plays the most notable was *The Duke of Guise*, by Dryden and Lee, which was acted on December 4, 1682, and to the stage arrangements of which I alluded in my second chapter. In this Betterton played the Duke, Smith played Grillon, and Mrs. Barry was the heroine, Marmoutier. This was one of the most political of Dryden’s productions. The history of the Duke of Guise had very obvious resemblance to that of the Duke of Monmouth, and though Dryden afterwards denied that this was the intention of the authors, the Whig faction made every effort to condemn the piece. In this they were unsuccessful. Crowne’s

City Politics (1683) was another political play, attacking, as may be gathered from the title, the City and the Whigs. Even Ravenscroft's comedy of *Dame Dobson ; or, The Cunning Woman* (1683 or 1684), which is non-political, had a furious anti-Whig epilogue, while Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's *Valentinian* (probably 1684) carried the doctrine of non-resistance to the court to an absurd pitch. This tragedy, which Rochester did not live to complete, was a great success, partly because it was well acted, and partly by reason of the interest made for it by the author's friends. To quote Downes, the play was "Crown'd with great Gain of Reputation ; and Profit to the *Actors*." Betterton played Æcius ; Goodman, Valentinian ; Kynaston, Maximus ; Griffin, Pontius ; and Mrs. Barry, Lucina.

The popularity of these political plays was injurious alike to dramatic art and to its exponents, and furnished another reason why, for some years after 1682, Betterton played few characters in new plays, and none which were really of the first importance.

The death of Charles II., on February 6, 1685, deprived the theatre of its greatest supporter. The event was duly lamented on the stage in an elaborate production entitled *Albion and Albanus*,* which Dryden originally wrote as a satire on the Whigs and Republicans, and a panegyric of Charles and James. While it was in preparation Charles died, and Dryden introduced into his last scene the apotheosis of the king. This piece of loyalty run mad is of great interest from the stage historian's point of view, for Dryden has given with much minuteness a description of the machinery and decorations invented by Betterton for the occasion.

* *Albion* is intended to represent Charles II. ; *Albanus* his brother James.

"The Descriptions of the Scenes, and other Decorations of the Stage," says Dryden in his preface, "I had from Mr. *Betterton*, who has spar'd neither for Industry nor Cost, to make this Entertainment perfect, nor for Invention of the Ornaments to beautifie it." These elaborate stage decorations have been referred to in a previous chapter; meanwhile it is interesting to gather from Dryden's words that Betterton was stage-manager of the theatre, having apparently even the control of the money expended on the mounting of the piece. In spite of its loyal sentiments, its violent abuse of the Whigs, and its elaborate decorations, the opera resulted in great loss to the treasury. This arose from several causes. First, there was the opposition of political opponents to reckon with. Then there was a musical opposition, probably quite as bitter as the political. The composer who acted as Dryden's collaborator was Louis Grabu or Grebus, the master of the king's music; and all the followers of Purcell and English music were up in arms against him.* Fate, too, warred against the unfortunate piece, for the intelligence of the Duke of Monmouth's landing in the west seems to have reached London on the day of the play's production, and in the general consternation *Albion and Albanus* came to grief, Albanus himself being, no doubt, too anxious about the stability of his throne to think about his theatrical eulogy. In stating that the opera was produced on the day when the news of Monmouth's landing was received, I follow Downes, our only first-hand authority on the point, who says,

* Pepys has several allusions to this composer. On February 20, 1667, he notes that "the King's Viallin, Bannister, is mad that the King hath a Frenchman come to be chief of some part of the King's musique:" and on October 1 of the same year he criticizes the music of the Frenchman with refreshing vigour.

"This [opera] being perform'd on a very Unlucky Day, being the Day the *Duke of Monmouth* landed in the *West*. The Nation being in a great consternation, it was perform'd but Six times, which not Answering half THE Charge they were at, Involv'd the Company very much in debt."

Regarding Betterton and his decorations, the music, and the failure of piece, some very good verses were written, three of which I quote. I do not know where they were published, having found them in a curious volume of dramatic cuttings in the Guildhall Library.

"Each actor on the stage his luck bewailing,
Finds that his loss is infallibly true ;
Smith, Nokes, and Leigh, in a fever with railing,
Curse poet, painter, and Monsieur Grabu.

"Betterton, Betterton, thy decorations,
And the machines, were well written, we knew ;
But all the words were such stuff, we want patience,
And little better is Monsieur Grabu.

"Damme, says Underhill, I'm out of two hundred
Hoping that rainbows and peacocks would do ;
Who thought infallible Tom could have blundered ?
A plague upon him and Monsieur Grabu !"

"Infallible Tom" is, of course, Betterton ; and the reference to rainbows and peacocks will be understood by those who remember the descriptions of the scenery and effects of the piece given in my second chapter.

In 1687, *Bellamira ; or, The Mistress*, the best of Sir Charles Sedley's plays, was produced ; while two of Aphra Behn's pieces saw the light about the same time. These were *The Lucky Chance ; or, An Alderman's Bargain*, a comedy, in which Betterton played Gayman, who profits by his bargain with the Alderman ; and the farce of *The Emperor of the Moon*. In the former, Mrs. Behn reaches

her high-water mark of indecency ; and in the second she has written one of the best pantomimic farces ever seen, the characters of Harlequin and Scaramouch, played by Jevon and Leigh, being models of their class. Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia*, an excellent comedy, largely founded on the *Adelphi* of Terence, was one of the great successes of the period. Being, says Downes, "often Honour'd with the presence of Chancelloir *Jefferies*, and other great Persons," it ran for thirteen days. For his third day the author received one hundred and thirty pounds, the largest receipt ever taken in the theatre at single prices. This does not sound a very formidable sum to us now, but, at 4s., 2s. 6d., 1s. 6d., and 1s. admission, it means a huge audience. In the dedication Shadwell says, "I had the great honour to find so many friends, that the house was never so full since it was built, as upon the third day of this Play, and vast numbers went away, that could not be admitted."

Somewhere about this point the Revolution comes in, and the Whig dramatists of course came to the top. Their ranks were recruited by such time-serving poets as Dryden and Crowne, who had preached the most high-flying Tory doctrines while Charles and James were on the throne, but changed their tune to Whiggery when Whigs were uppermost. Crowne, whose *City Politics* (1683) was written to abuse the City and the Whigs, writes *The English Friar* (1689) to expose the Romish priests ; Dryden, the author of the fulsome *Albion and Albanius* (1685), in which Charles and James are bespattered with nauseous praise, writes in his *Don Sebastian, King of Portugal* (1690), such lines as—

"*Alvarez*. Were Kings e'er known in this degenerate Age,
So passionately fond of noble acts
Where Interest shar'd not more than half with honour ?

Sebastian. Base groveling soul, who know'st not Honour's worth,
 But weigh'st it out in mercenary scales ;
 The secret pleasure of a generous act,
 Is the great mind's great bribe. .
Alvarez. Show me that King, and I'll believe the Phoenix."

In the preface to this democratic tragedy Dryden pays Betterton the greatest compliment ever paid to player by a poet of such eminence. He tells how he allowed the actor to cut twelve hundred lines out of his play, and was pleased with his skill in doing so. He writes, "About twelve hundred lines have been cut off from this Tragedy, since it was first deliver'd to the Actors. They were indeed so judiciously lopt by Mr. Betterton, to whose care and excellent action I am equally obliged, that the connexion of the story was not lost." Betterton's "excellent action" was displayed in the character of Don Alonzo, a noble Portuguese, who being injured, as he supposes, by Don Sebastian, turns Renegade, and assumes the name of Dorax.

As a make-weight to Dryden's and Crowne's apostasy, Elkanah Settle shifted round the other way. He was at first the poet of the Whigs, but prostituted his powers so shamefully as to write a poem on the coronation of James II., and even went so far as to perpetrate a panegyric on Judge Jefferies. Poor Elkanah did not profit by his tergiversation, for the Revolution came before he had got his reward. In his dedication to *Distressed Innocence* (1691) he complains of his hard lot. "I grew weary," he writes, "of my little talent in dramatics, and forsooth must be rambling into politics; and much I have got by it, for, I thank 'em, they have undone me."

About this time were produced also Aphra Behn's

tragi-comedy of *Widow Ranter ; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia*, in which Mrs. Curren played the Widow, a masculine female, who dresses as a man, fights, drinks, smokes, and swears, in quite roystering fashion ; Dryden's comedy of *Amphitryon*, in which Betterton acted Jupiter ; and the opera of *The Prophetess*, altered from Fletcher by Betterton. In this opera, and in that of *King Arthur*, by Dryden (1691), the music was composed by "Famous Mr. *Henry Purcell*," as Downes puts it, and the dances were arranged by Joseph Priest, the decorations being no doubt under the care of Betterton himself. Downes seems to have considered that both pieces got the actors reputation and the managers gain ; but Cibber took a different view of the case. He says that though the apparent success of these expensive luxuries was very great, yet their cost was so extravagant that, in spite of the large receipts they brought, they resulted in loss rather than profit.

After the union the actors do not appear to have found their condition bettered. Cibber, speaking, of course, of what he had been told, not of what he had seen, says that the patentees imposed hard terms on their actors, knowing that there was no other theatre to which they could betake themselves. The profits of the house were divided into twenty shares, ten of which the proprietors took, the remainder being shared among the actors in their several proportions. Nor were monetary arrangements the only hardships under which the players groaned. The Adventurers, whether original shareholders of Dorset Garden Theatre, or, as Cibber states, "money-making persons" to whom the patentees had sold portions of their shares, seem to have had power of control over the theatrical as well as the business management, and to have interfered materially in stage affairs, resenting

every expense as tending to reduce their dividends. Actors were badly paid, plays were cheaply put on the stage ; in fact, the theatre was starved. No wonder, then, that, when Cibber joined the Theatre Royal in 1690, the actors were in a state of simmering discontent, which, five years later, broke into open revolt.

About 1692 the theatre was weakened by the death of James Nokes, Mountfort, and Anthony Leigh. So far as we know, the first and last of these actors died in the ordinary course of nature, but poor Will Mountfort received his death from a scoundrel's sword, though whether he was assassinated or killed in fair fight is a disputed point. His slayer was one Captain Richard Hill, a dissipated fellow who proposed to marry beautiful Anne Bracegirdle. His addresses being rejected, Hill swore to be revenged on Mountfort, whom he considered to be Mrs. Bracegirdle's favoured lover, and the principal hindrance to his suit. Aided by that most disreputable of noblemen, Lord Mohun, he tried to carry off the lady by force. Foiled in this attempt, Mohun and Hill lay in wait for Mountfort, and, whether in fair fight or by a cowardly blow, killed him. Hill fled from England, but Mohun took his trial for murder before his peers, and was acquitted by a majority of voices, a considerable number of noblemen, however, giving a verdict of guilty against him. As it was never hinted that Mohun was more than an accessory in the deed, the fact that fourteen of his peers voted for finding him guilty of assassinating Mountfort shows that, to them at least, Hill's action was murder.

The death of Nokes and Leigh did not make any vacancies in the casts of plays which Betterton could supply ; but Mountfort's decease furnished him with the opportunity of distinguishing himself in one of the late

actor's best parts. This was Alexander the Great in Lee's *Rival Queens*. Cibber gives so admirable an account of Betterton's excellence in this part that it would be unpardonable to omit to quote it.

"When this favourite Play I am speaking of, from its being too frequently acted, was worn out, and came to be deserted by the Town, upon the sudden Death of *Monfort*, who had play'd *Alexander* with Success for several Years, the Part was given to *Betterton*, which, under this great Disadvantage of the Satiety it had given, he immediately reviv'd with so new a Lustre that for three Days together it fill'd the House ; and had his then declining Strength been equal to the Fatigue the Action gave him, it probably might have doubled its Success ; an uncommon Instance of the Power and intrinsick Merit of an Actor. This I mention not only to prove what irresistible Pleasure may arise from a judicious Elocution, with scarce Sense to assist it ; but to shew you too, that tho' *Betterton* never wanted Fire and Force when his Character demanded it ; yet, where it was not demanded, he never prostituted his Power to the low Ambition of a false Applause. And further, that when, from a too advanced Age, he resigned that toilsome Part of *Alexander*, the Play for many Years after never was able to impose upon the Publick ; and I look upon his so particularly supporting the false Fire and Extravagancies of that Character to be a more surprizing Proof of his Skill than his being eminent in those of *Shakespear* ; because there, Truth and Nature coming to his Assistance, he had not the same Difficulties to combat, and consequently we must be less amaz'd at his Success where we are more able to account for it."

And on another page Cibber, quoting some bombastic lines from this play, adds, "When these flowing numbers came from the mouth of a Betterton the multitude no more desired sense to them than our Musical *Connoisseurs* think it essential in the celebrate *Airs* of an Italian Opera."

Davies has preserved an anecdote in connection with this part which is pleasantly characteristic of the amiable and modest Betterton. At rehearsal one day he was striving to recall a particular tone or emphasis given by Hart to a certain passage, which had struck him many years before as being especially effective. Unable himself to recall it, he applied to the other actors, but they could not help him. At last one of the lowest of the company repeated the line exactly in Hart's key, and, says Davies, "Betterton thanked him heartily, and put a piece of money in his hand, as a reward for so acceptable a service."

Before 1695 Congreve's famous comedies, *The Old Bachelor* and *The Double Dealer*; Dryden's *Cleomenes*, and, his last play, *Love Triumphant*; and Southerne's powerful tragedy of *The Fatal Marriage*, afforded Betterton a series of admirable characters, both tragic and comic. In *The Old Bachelor* the wonderful genius of Congreve, a youth of three and twenty, burst on the town. The highest expectations were aroused regarding the merits of the piece, for John Dryden had declared that he never saw such a first play in his life, and Southerne, himself a dramatist of position, was also loud in its praise. The actors, too, did all that could be done to aid its success, for it was cast with the full strength of the company. Betterton played the surly Old Bachelor; Powell and Williams were the Bellmour and Vainlove; while Dogget was an absolutely ideal representative of the much-abused Fondlewife. The female characters were played by five of the most beautiful and talented women ever seen in one play—Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Mountfort, Mrs. Bowman, and Mrs. Leigh. The success of the comedy, which was produced in January, 1693, was immediate and striking. It was acted fourteen times successively, was repeatedly revived,

and became a regular stock piece in the theatre. *The Double Dealer* (November, 1693) was less successful, though the cast was again superb—Betterton playing Maskwell; Dogget, Sir Paul Plyant; and Kynaston, Lord Touchwood; while the same actresses, with the exception of Mrs. Bowman, who had no part, lent their powerful services.

But in spite of the interest aroused by the production of the pieces which I have mentioned, the loss of three actors of the importance of Nokes, Mountfort, and Leigh materially diminished the attractiveness of the theatre; and the proprietors naturally bethought themselves how the deficit which their returns showed could be turned into a profit. Unfortunately, instead of endeavouring to increase the attractions they offered to the public by good new plays and revivals, and by judicious encouragement of their remaining actors, they embraced a penny-wise-and-pound-foolish policy, and tried to reduce their actors' salaries into agreement with the decreased income from the public. This, which ought to have been their last resort, was apparently their first thought, and, with a courage that demands recognition, they struck boldly at the most powerful of their actors. To give some show of justice to their proceedings, they attempted as much as they dared to shelve their oldest and best-paid players, and to bring forward in leading parts the younger actors,—this, of course, under a pretence that they wished to encourage rising talent. Accordingly, George Powell, young, clever, and presumptuous, was cast for several of Betterton's best parts; and Mrs. Bracegirdle was offered the chance of supplanting Mrs. Barry—if she could. But the patentees' scheme miscarried, for Mrs. Bracegirdle was too wise to interfere with her famous companion's characters, and positively declined to play any part that

was the acknowledged property of Mrs. Barry. Even if the younger players had fallen into the scheme of their rulers, the result could not have been good. No considerations whatever will reconcile the public to accept an inferior actor in a part for which a better representative is still on the stage; and such an experiment simply ends in empty benches.

Another result, which might have been foreseen, was the rousing of the players to measures of self-defence. Betterton brought about a coalition of all the leading actors and actresses, engaging to adhere to one another through all vicissitudes of the fight they were about to wage against the patentees. This coalition seems to have been quite well known to the ruling powers, and they on their side got up an association to support them. An offer of peace made by the actors was scornfully refused by the patentees, who could not conceive that any effective steps could be taken by the rebels so long as the authority of the two patents was in their hands. But herein they reckoned without their host. The feeling of the public was all in favour of the actors, and their cause was espoused by many powerful friends among the nobility. Foremost among these was Sir Robert Howard, a *persona grata* to the court, and one whose intimate knowledge of theatrical matters entitled him to speak with authority on the subject in dispute.* When the ill-used actors took the formal step of complaining to the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Dorset, who then held that office, seems to have taken Sir Robert Howard into council, and he having declared that he thought the actors' complaints just, the Chamberlain recommended King William to grant their petition. His Majesty,

* It will be remembered that he was a partner with Killigrew in the erection of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane.

though he took little interest in theatrical matters, was yet curious to see at close quarters such notable artists as Betterton and Mrs. Barry; and he accordingly granted the seceding actors an audience. The lawyers having pronounced that the previous grants by Charles II., while remaining valid in succeeding reigns, did not disable the king from making further concessions of the same nature, William granted the actors' petition; and on March 25, 1695, a license was issued to Thomas Betterton, Elizabeth Barry, Anne Bracegirdle, John Bowman, Joseph Williams, Cave Underhill, Thomas Dogget, William Bowen, Susan Verbruggen, Elizabeth (at first incorrectly said to be Elinor) Leigh, and George Bright, by which they were empowered to perform practically any sort of play at any place they might select. For the company thus licensed a theatre was erected within the walls of the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields, as will be related in the following chapter.

Two leading members of Betterton's company do not appear in this list—William Smith and Samuel Sandford. We may assume that, though they preferred to act with their great chief, they were not prepared to undertake any pecuniary responsibility, and so took the position of salaried actors rather than that of sharers in the speculation. This view is confirmed by Aston's anecdote of Sandford, of whom he relates that

"he would not be concern'd with Mr. *Betterton*, Mrs. *Barry*, &c. as a Sharer in the Revolt from *Drury-Lane* to *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*; but said, *This is my Agreement*.—To Samuel Sandford, *Gentleman*, Threescore Shillings a Week. Pho! pho! said Mr. Betterton, *Three Pounds a Week*. No, no, said Sandford;—To Samuel Sandford, *Gentleman*, Threescore Shillings a Week. For which *Cave Underhill*, who was a $\frac{3}{4}$ Sharer, would often jeer *Sandford*; saying, *Samuel Sandford, Gent. my Man*. Go, you Sot, said *Sandford*.—To

which t'other ever replied, *Samuel Sandford, my Man Samuel.*"

Before leaving this period, one of the few personal incidents regarding Betterton of which we have knowledge demands notice. This was the loss of all, or nearly all, the money which he had saved, by an unfortunate speculation in which he was induced to join a friend, Sir Francis Watson, in 1692. The ship which carried the fortunes of Betterton and his friend was captured in the Channel by the French, and the old actor lost a sum variously stated at two thousand and eight thousand pounds. Probably he was forced also to part with the little farm in Berkshire, regarding which Anthony Aston is our informant. He mentions it in the following anecdote :—

"Mr. *Betterton* had a small Farm near *Reading*, in the County of *Berks*; and the Countryman came, in the Time of *Bartholomew-Fair*, to pay his Rent.—Mr. *Betterton* took him to the Fair, and going to one *Crawley's* Puppet-Shew, offer'd *Two Shillings* for himself and *Roger*, his Tenant.—*No, no, Sir*, said *Crawley*; *we never take Money of one another*. This affronted Mr. *Betterton* who threw down the Money, and they enter'd.—*Roger* was hugely diverted with *Punch*, and bred a great Noise, saying, that he would drink with him, for he was a merry Fellow.—Mr. *Betterton* told him, he was only a Puppet, made up of *Sticks and Rags*: However, *Roger* still cried out, that he would go and drink with *Punch*.—When Master took him behind, where the Puppets hung up, he swore, he thought *Punch* had been alive.—*However*, said he, *though he be but Sticks and Rags, I'll give him Six-pence to drink my Health*.—At Night, Mr. *Betterton* went to the Theatre, when was play'd the ORPHAN; Mr. *Betterton* acting *Castalio*; Mrs. *Barry Monimia*.—*Well* (said Master) *how dost like this Play*, *Roger*? *Why, I don't knows*, (says *Roger*) *its well enough for Sticks and Rags*."

CHAPTER VI.

THOMAS BETTERTON (1695-1705).

WHILE the struggle between the might of the patentees and the right of the actors was still in progress,* the patentees had endeavoured to bring the chief actors who were of neither party into their interest. These, knowing how dire the condition of the theatre would be if Betterton and his associates deserted, naturally made good terms for themselves; and Cibber records that George Powell and Jack Verbruggen, who had previously two pounds per week, insisted on double that amount as the price of their faithfulness to their employers. Other actors' salaries were raised in equal proportion, and Colley himself was advanced from twenty shillings per week to thirty. But the company remaining at the Theatre Royal was a woefully feeble one, and to recruit their weakened forces the patentees brought new actors from the country. Cibber says that they were forced to beat up for volunteers in several distant counties; which, I suppose, can only mean that the new recruits were strolling players. Among these two notable actors were included: Benjamin Johnson, famous for playing cha-

* It was prolonged by the death of Queen Mary (on December 28, 1694), which, of course, put a stop to all theatrical performances for the time.

racters in his great namesake's comedies ; and William Bullock, a large and vivacious low comedian, full of drolery, but much addicted to "gagging." But by far the most valuable recruits whom the Theatre Royal received were presented to it by its opponents. These were Mrs. Mountfort (now Mrs. Verbruggen) and Joseph Williams, who left Betterton's company before having appeared in a single part, and, in fact, before the new theatre had opened. It was a pecuniary dispute that led to their return to their old allegiance. Williams and Mrs. Verbruggen considered themselves entitled to an equal share of the profits with their fellows ; but Betterton and his companions would not agree to this, and the dissatisfied players seceded. Cibber strongly censures the foolishness of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company, pointing out that though Williams "loved his bottle better than his business," and though Mrs. Verbruggen was only a comedian, yet they were too good players to be lightly lost. But, indeed, the troubles of Betterton's company seem to have commenced at once, and it is a curious fact that of the eleven players whose names I gave in the last chapter as sharers in the new speculation, only seven appear to have completed the agreement. Williams and Mrs. Verbruggen deserted ; Dogget and Bowen apparently continued as salaried actors, but not as sharers.

The patentees naturally were ready to take the field before their rivals had made all their preparations, and Drury Lane opened on Easter Monday, April, 1695. The first play was a revival of Aphra Behn's *Adelazar ; or, The Moor's Revenge*, a strong tragedy, adapted from *Lust's Dominion*. On the first day the house was very full ; but whether the play or the actors did not please, on the second it was empty, and this was the precursor of many similar houses.

Betterton and his comrades were not in a position to begin so quickly as the patentees. They appear to have had some difficulty in raising the funds for their campaign, for Gildon says that their expenses were great, and that "we all know what means they found to make 'em lighter, we know what importuning and dunning the Noblemen there was, what flattering, and what promising there was, till at length the encouragement they received by liberal Contributions set 'em in a condition to go on." Cibber gives the result of these negotiations with their noble patrons. He says that many people of quality voluntarily subscribed forty guineas or twenty guineas for the purpose of erecting a theatre within the walls of the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. By April 30, 1695, all difficulties were surmounted, and on that day the New Playhouse (for so it was always entitled) was opened with the first production of Congreve's *Love for Love*.

The site of this theatre has been the subject of some discussion, but it seems to me that we have very clear evidence of its exact situation. I do not know any plan of London on which the theatre is marked during Betterton's tenancy of it. But we are able to discover its position by a very simple chain of reasoning. Cibber, in chap. xiii. of his *Apology*, relates how Christopher Rich, when turned out of Drury Lane by William Collier in November, 1709, set about "rebuilding the New Theatre in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, of which he had taken a Lease at a low Rent, ever since *Betterton's* Company had first left it;" that is, in March, 1705. This being so, the identification of Betterton's theatre is simple, for old maps of London show clearly that Rich's house was situated in Portugal Street, opposite the end of the then unnamed street, now called Carey Street. In George Foster's "New and Exact Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster,"

published on August 30, 1738, it is marked as "The New Play House"—a name which it will be observed Cibber gives Betterton's theatre, and by which Downes also describes it. This title seems to have stuck to it until many years after it was finally closed as a theatre. The site is now occupied by a portion of the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons; the old building, which had been successively a barrack, an auction-room, and a china repository, being pulled down by the college about 1848.

In the prologue, spoken by Betterton on the opening night, the action of the seceders is explained and defended in the following lines:—

"The Husbandman in vain renews his Toil,
To cultivate each Year a hungry Soil;
And fondly hopes for rich and generous Fruit,
When what should feed the Tree, devours the Root:
Th' unladen Boughs, he sees, bode certain Dearth,
Unless transplanted to more Kindly Earth.
So, the poor Husbands of the Stage, who found
Their Labours lost upon ungrateful Ground,
This last and only Remedy have prov'd;
And hope new Fruit from ancient Stocks remov'd.
Well may they hope, when you so kindly aid,
Well plant a Soil, which you so rich have made.
As Nature gave the World to Man's first Age,
So from your Bounty we receive this Stage;
The Freedom Man was born to, you've restor'd,
And to our World such Plenty you afford,
It seems, like *Eden*, fruitful of its own Accord."

The allusions in the last seven lines to their benefactors of course refer to the noble subscribers to their theatre, whose "appearance in the Boxes," says Gildon, "gave the House as much Advantage as their Contributions."

The epilogue, delivered by Mrs. Bracegirdle, is of quite exceptional interest, giving as it does an account of the

theatre in which it was spoken. It has also the remarkable merit of being entirely quotable—a rare thing in post-Restoration addresses.

“Sure Providence at first design’d this Place
 To be the Player’s Refuge in Distress ;
 For still, in every Storm, they all run hither
 As to a Shed, that shields them from the Weather.
 But thinking of this Change which last befell us,
 It’s like what I have heard our Poets tell us :
 For when behind our Scenes their Suits are pleading,
 To help their Love, sometimes they shew their Reading ;
 And, wanting Ready Cash to pay for Hearts,
 They top their Learning on us, and their Parts.
 Once of Philosophers they told us Stories,
 Whom as I think they called—*Py-Pythagories*,
 I’m sure ’tis some such *Latin* Name they give them,
 And we, who know no better, must believe them.
 Now to these Men (say they) such Souls were given,
 That after Death ne’er went to Hell nor Heaven,
 But liv’d, I know not how, in Beasts ; and then
 When many Years were past, in Men again.
 Methinks, we Players resemble such a Soul.
 That, does from Bodies ; we, from Houses Strole.
 Thus *Aristotle’s* Soul, of old that was,
 May now be damn’d to animate an Ass ;
 Or in this very House, for aught we know,
 Is doing painful Penance in some *Beau* :
 And thus, our Audience, which did once resort }
 To shining Theatres, to see our Sport, }
 Now find us toss’d into a Tennis-Court. }
 These walls but t’other Day were fill’d with Noise
 Of Roaring Gamesters and your *Damme Boys* ;
 Then bounding Balls and Rackets they encompass ;
 And now they’re filled with Jests, and Flights, and
 Bombast !
 I vow, I don’t much like this Transmigration, }
 Stroling from Place to Place, and Circulation ; }
 Grant Heaven, we don’t return to our first Station ! }

I know not what these think ; but, for my part, }
 I can't reflect without an aking heart, }
 How we should end in, our Original, a Cart.
 But we can't fear, since you're so good to save us,
 That you have only set us up, to leave us.
 Thus, from the Past, we hope for future Grace,
 I beg it—
 And some here know I have a begging Face.
 Then pray continue this your kind Behaviour ;
 For a clear Stage won't do, without your Favour."

The seceders were extremely fortunate in their opening play, Congreve's *Love for Love*, one of the most brilliant of English comedies, and one which afforded splendid opportunities for the actors. A glance at the *dramatis personæ* will show how strong the company was. The illiterate old astrologer, Foresight, was played by Sandford ; while the other old man of the play, Sir Sampson Legend, was acted by Cave Underhill. The young men are Valentine, played by Betterton, and Ben, the sailor, whom Dogget acted. Tattle, the half-witted Beau, and Scandal, whose name explains his character, were represented by Bowman and Smith. Angelica was Mrs. Bracegirdle ; Mrs. Foresight, Mrs. Bowman ; while Mrs. Frail, whose name is also explanatory, was played by Mrs. Barry ; and the country girl, Miss Prue, by Mrs. Ayliff. Regarding the success of this wonderfully witty comedy, Downes chronicles that "being Extraordinarily well Acted, chiefly the Part of *Ben* the Sailor, it took 13 Days successively." Cibber adds that the company had seldom any occasion to play any other piece during the whole of that season ; which we may take to mean that they alternated *Love for Love* with their regular stock plays, such as *Hamlet*, *The Old Bachelor*, etc., and did not require to rely on other new pieces. Gildon, too, adds his testimony to the extraordinary success of

Love for Love. In his *Comparison between the Two Stages* he has the following :—

Ramble. You know the New-house opened with an extraordinary good Comedy [*Love for Love*], the like has scarce been heard of.

Critick. I allow that Play contributed not a little to their Reputation and Profit ; it was the Work of a popular Author ; but that was not all, the Town was ingag'd in its favour, and in favour of the Actors long before the Play was Acted.

Sullen. The good Humour those Noble Patrons were in, gave that Comedy such infinite Applause ; and what the Quality approve, the lower sort take upon trust."

Love for Love was written before the secession of Betterton and his companions, and was designed for Drury Lane. Indeed, so far had matters progressed, that the play had been read and accepted by the patentees. But before all the necessary arrangements were made the revolt began, and Congreve wisely delayed coming to any definite conclusion until he should see how it ended. When the patentees were left destitute of good actors, the author naturally declined to let his play be experimented on by raw recruits, and gave it to the actors for whom it had been originally designed. To this he alludes in the last three lines of the prologue—

"And should th' ensuing scenes not chance to hit,
He offers this his one excuse—'twas writ
Before your late Encouragement of Wit."

Cibber says that, in consideration of Congreve's promising to give the company one new play each year, if his health permitted, the actors gave him a whole share in the profits of the theatre. There is no reason to doubt Cibber's statement, which is confirmed by Downes ; but we have no information regarding the exact terms of

the agreement or the length of its duration. It may be questioned if, after the first year or so, a share in the company was worth anything: at any rate, Congreve did not fulfil the agreement, if he made it, to supply a play annually. *The Mourning Bride* was not produced till 1697, between two and three years after *Love for Love*; and *The Way of the World* did not see the light till early in the year 1700.

We have now seen both companies fairly launched, though in very different trim. The overpowering superiority of Betterton's company at first made Drury Lane a desert; but in a surprisingly short time the younger actors began to hold their own fairly well against their old and experienced rivals. Various causes contributed to this curious result. One of the chief strengths of the Drury Lane company lay in the excellence of some of the new plays which they produced. In 1696 Southerne's admirable play of *Oroonoko* was a great success. George Powell was originally intended to play the hero, but the Marquis of Halifax, who was Lord Chamberlain, ordered the part to be taken from him and given to Jack Verbruggen, saying that "Jack was the unpolished hero, and would do it best." This strikes us as a strange exertion of the Chamberlain's authority; but his Grace was artistically correct, and Jack played *Oroonoko* perfectly. Anthony Aston, in a very quaint passage, says he *was* *Oroonoko*. Describing his natural and powerful style, Anthony says, "And you may best conceive his manly, wild Starts, by these words in *Oroonoko*,—*Ha! thou hast rous'd the Lyon [in] his Den; he stalks abroad, and the wild Forest trembles at his Roar*:—Which was spoke, like a Lyon, by *Oroonoko*, and *Jack Verbruggen*; for Nature was so predominant, that his second Thoughts never alter'd his prime Performance." Imoinda was played by Mrs.

Rogers, a beautiful and fascinating actress, and Charlot Weldon by the mainstay of the company, Mrs. Verbruggen. She was very loth to accept this character, in which it is necessary to assume male attire; but she was ultimately prevailed upon to play it, and so lent her valuable aid to a piece which was one of the most popular plays ever produced, and continued on the acting list almost up to the present time.

Vanbrugh, too, was a powerful contributor to the success of Drury Lane. His comedy of *The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger*, which was written as a sequel to Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, was enormously superior to the piece which suggested it, and takes rank as one of the very best of English comedies. Lord Foppington was acted by Colley Cibber, prince of fops and coxcombs, then in the first brilliancy of his success as an actor, and contributed vastly to the reputation both of author and player. The comedy of *Æsop*, by the same dramatist, was also a great success, to which Colley Cibber's excellent acting of the title-part materially contributed. By this time the Drury Lane company had risen much higher in public estimation, and the cast of this particular comedy is by no means conspicuously weak. Dogget, who had deserted Betterton's company, as will be related further on, played Learchus, father of Euphronia, whom he wishes to marry Æsop; and Mrs. Verbruggen was the representative of Doris, nurse to Euphronia. Among the characters who come to consult Æsop, Pinkethman played the 1st Tradesman, Quaint, and Sir Polidorus Hogstye; and Haynes acted Roger, in which he was so good that Anthony Aston declared that nobody but Joe ever touched the character.

To the value of these three plays to the company *The Comparison between the Two Stages* bears em-

phatic testimony, saying, "*Oroonoko*, *Æsop*, and *Relapse* are Master-pieces, and subsisted Drury-lane House, the first two or three years." Nor must it be forgotten, to Colley Cibber's credit, that his first play, *Love's Last Shift*; or, *The Fool in Fashion* (1696), was one of the earliest gleams of good fortune that brightened the path of his fellow-players. Against these successes the older actors could only reckon two really notable plays—Vanbrugh's *Provoked Wife*, in which Betterton acted the boisterous part of Sir John Brute, and Congreve's *Mourning Bride*, in which he played Osmyn.

But the greatest advantage which the Drury Lane company enjoyed was the superior order enforced by the governing powers. Among their rivals everybody was a captain, and nobody a private soldier. Some little deference might be paid to Betterton's superior age and genius; but the association was a commonwealth, and every man was as good as his neighbour. On the other hand, at Drury Lane the actors were ruled with a rod of iron by the patentees, or rather by the active intriguer who had by this time contrived to obtain a practical monopoly of the power of the patent, Christopher Rich.

This extraordinary personage had been a lawyer. How he became possessed of his share in the patent is thus stated by himself in a letter written to the Lord Chamberlain in 1705: "I am a purchaser under the Patents, to above the value of two Thousand Pounds (a great part of which was under the Marriage-Settlements of Dr. Davenant)." The date of the assignation of Davenant's share of the patent to Rich was March 24, 1691, and from that time the new-comer seems to have exercised an overwhelming power in the management of the theatre, although his share in it was comparatively small, being in point of fact a trifle more than one-sixth. Charles

Killigrew, it is shown in the legal "Opinion" of Northey and Raymond in 1711, retained three-twentieths of the patent. The remaining seventeen-twentieths were divided into tenths, of which Rich possessed two; his exact share being thus seventeen one-hundredths. How he came to exercise the preponderating influence he did in the management of the theatre is a mystery, the solution of which may perhaps be found in his strength of will, and freedom from anything resembling scruples or over-nicety of conscience.

But if Drury Lane suffered from too much management, Lincoln's Inn Fields, as has already been noted, had no management at all. The tragedians and comedians quarrelled as to the relative values of their particular departments; the tragic actors pluming themselves on the superior elevation of their cast of character; the comedians vaunting the greater naturalness of comedy, and declaring that tragedy was absurd, because nobody ever spoke as tragedy demanded since the world was. This dispute took practical shape when a new play was produced. The comedians were up in arms immediately against the cost of the plumes and trappings of tragedy; the tragedians were indignant that a mere fop should be dressed more expensively than Alexander the Great or Solyman the Magnificent. Dogget was the ringleader of the comedians. His recent success in *Ben the Sailor* (*Love for Love*) made him more aggressive, and when he found that his complaints produced no effect, he deserted Betterton and returned to the service of the patentees at Drury Lane. In connection with this secession a curious document exists among the records of the Lord Chamberlain's office. It is dated October 26, 1696, and recites how both companies were in the habit of seducing actors from their rivals, Dogget having been tempted away from

Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Verbruggen induced to desert the patentees. The Lord Chamberlain orders Verbruggen to return to Drury Lane at once, and to remain there till January 1, 1697, after which he can act where he chooses. Doggè, curiously enough, was not interfered with, but allowed to remain at Drury Lane.

So scandalous did the irregularities of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company become that the Lord Chamberlain was at last forced to interfere. On November 11, 1700, he issued an edict, commanding Betterton to take upon himself the sole management of the company, there having been great disorders for want of a sufficient authority to keep the actors to their duty. That the Lord Chamberlain's interference was not unnecessary is proved by the description which a dramatic author, David Craufurd, gives of the treatment he received from the Lincoln's Inn Fields actors in this same year, 1700. Craufurd wrote a play, *Courtship-à-la-Mode*, which he submitted to the older actors, but withdrew from them, and gave to their younger rivals in Drury Lane. His reason for doing this is thus stated in his preface—

"It was enter'd in the other House, where Mr. *Betterton* did me all the justice I could indeed reasonably hope for. But that example he gave, was not it seems to be follow'd by the whole company, since 'tis known that Mr. *Bowman* (I mention his name to keep the reflection from other sharers) kept the first character of my play six weeks, and then cou'd hardly read six lines on't. How far that way of management makes of late for the interest and honour of that House, is easie to be judg'd. Some who valu'd their reputations more, were indeed rarely or never absent. To these I gave my thanks ; but finding that six or seven people cou'd not perform what was design'd for fifteen, I was oblig'd to remove it after so many sham rehearsals, and in two days it got footing upon the other stage. Where 'twas immediately cast to the best advantage, and plaid in less than twenty days.'

But while the rival companies were doing their best to ruin each other, a thunderbolt was forging which, when launched, shook the theatre to its foundations. Congreve and Vanbrugh were now the chief supports of the stage, and the principal purveyors of indecency, and on them the bolt fell with crushing effect. A Non-juring clergyman was the Jove whose hand delivered the blow. Jeremy Collier, whose name stank in the nostrils of all theatrical people in his own day, but whom we now esteem as one of the most valuable of theatrical reformers, was born in 1650. He graduated at Caius College, was appointed Rector of Ampton in 1679, and Lecturer at Gray's Inn in 1685. He was a vehement Loyalist, and at the Revolution in 1688 not only refused the oaths, but made himself conspicuous by his advocacy of the exiled king. Being an honest, earnest man, he ran his neck into danger by his writings against William, was twice imprisoned, and at last outlawed. He had the courage to attend to the scaffold Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkins, who were executed in 1696 for plotting against the life of King William, and to give them absolution just before their death. From the penalties attaching to such conduct he was relieved by the king, who, in consideration of the good done by his attack on immorality, pardoned him for his political offences. Collier's thunderbolt was entitled, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage: Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument*. It is an octavo volume of some three hundred pages, and was published in March, 1698.

Jeremy was a born controversialist, and he plunged into the fight with characteristic ardour. "Being convinced," he began his preface, "that nothing has gone further in Debauching the Age than the Stage-Poets and

Play-House, I thought I could not employ my Time better than by writing against them." He divides his work into six chapters. The first attacks the immodesty of the stage, and seeks to prove that not only is the indecency of the theatre in his time altogether shameful, but that it is worse than at any previous time, either ancient or modern. In his second chapter Collier deals with the profaneness of the stage, under three heads—cursing and swearing, abuse of religion and Scripture, and "downright blasphemy." His third chapter treats of the abuse showered upon the clergy by the dramatists; a topic which he discusses with much vehemence, for to Collier, as a High Churchman, the person and office of priest are sacred. In the fourth chapter the crying vice of Restoration comedy is attacked—that the hero is a vicious hero, and that he is always rewarded, instead of punished, at the end of the play—and Collier ends this division of his work by rebuking "the improper Conduct of the Stage with respect to Poetry and Ceremony." He goes on in his fifth chapter to examine critically Dryden's plays of *Amphitryon* and *King Arthur*, Tom Durfey's *Don Quixote*, and Vanbrugh's *Relapse*; and in chapter sixth, and last, he marshals a formidable array of authorities against stage performances—rallying to his banner the heathen philosophers, orators, and historians; the Constitutions of Athens, Sparta, and Rome; the Primitive Church, the Councils, and the Fathers.

This tremendous indictment, of course, elicited numerous replies. The greatest poet attacked, John Dryden, made no formal answer, thus practically confessing that he acknowledged the general justice of Collier's strictures; but Congreve and Vanbrugh published pamphlets in their own defence. Neither of them made any de-

fence worth considering; as Cibber says, Congreve seemed too much hurt to be able to defend himself, while Vanbrugh felt Collier's attack so little that his wit only laughed at it. Tom Durfey, Gildon, Motteux, and Tom Brown were the other dramatists who published their abuse of Collier; while John Dennis, the critic, argued at considerable length *The Usefulness of the Stage to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government, and to Religion*. To his chief assailants the redoubtable Jeremy published crushing replies; and to Dennis's argument he made as neat an answer as could be desired. He says that Dennis does not deny that lewdness is promoted by the stage, and, he adds, "this is, I suppose, the main reason of his saying that the Play-house contributes so much to the happiness of the nation."*

But the most interesting expression of opinion by the assailed dramatists was that of Dryden, who took the opportunity of referring to Collier's attack in the preface to his *Fables*, published in folio in 1700. There is a dignity and honesty about the great poet's recantation which cannot fail to impress us. He writes—

"I shall say the less of Mr. *Collier*, because in many Things he has tax'd me justly; and I have pleaded Guilty to all Thoughts and Expressions of mine, which can be truly argu'd of Obscenity, Profaneness, or Immorality; and retract them. If he be my Enemy, let him triumph; if he be my Friend, as I have given him no Personal Occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my Repentance. It becomes me not to draw my Pen in the Defence of a bad Cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one."

* Those who are curious to learn fuller details regarding this controversy will find a complete list of the various publications in my *Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature* (1888); while Mr. Gosse's *Life of Congreve* (1888) will be found to contain an altogether admirable account of the whole controversy and its literature.

In a previous passage of the same preface, Dryden explains that he has endeavoured to select such fables as contain some intrinsic moral; and he adds—

“I wish I could affirm with a safe Conscience, that I had taken the same Care in all my former Writings; for it must be own’d, that supposing Verses are never so beautiful or pleasing, yet if they contain anything which shocks Religion, or Good Manners, they are at best, what *Horace* says of good Numbers without good sense, *Versus inopes rerum, nugæque canoræ*.”

Strangely enough, one of the much-abused profession was converted by Collier’s fulminations, if we may believe the following very curious paragraph which appeared in the *Post-Boy* newspaper: “We hear that Mr. Bowen, the late famous comedian at the New Play-house, being convinced by Mr. Collier’s book against the stage, and satisfied that a shopkeeper’s life was the readiest way to heaven of the two, opens a cane shop, next door to the King’s Head Tavern, in Middle Row, Holborn, where it is not questioned but all manner of canes, toys, and other curiosities, will be obtained at reasonable rates.” Poor Bowen, however, returned to the stage, and met his death in a theatrical quarrel in 1718.

The result of Collier’s attack was more striking than even he himself could have anticipated. An immediate improvement in decency took place, and it might almost be said that a distinct line of demarcation can be drawn between the morals of plays before 1698 and after that year. One manifestation of the change in manners was a somewhat unpleasant experience for the actors. By an old statute of James I., a penalty of ten pounds was imposed upon any actor using the name of the Deity on the stage in a jesting or profane manner. A religious society, calling itself the “Society for the Reformation

of Manners," encouraged, no doubt, by the reception accorded to Collier's attack, hired informers, who placed themselves in different parts of the theatre and noted down any profane expression used on the stage. Informations were then laid against the actors, and in some cases the offenders were convicted and fined. *The Comparison between the Two Stages* informs us that Betterton, Ben Johnson, and Mrs. Bracegirdle were the objects of one such attack; and adds that Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle were fined, while Johnson was acquitted. Ultimately, Queen Anne, conscious that these informers were actuated by no love of morality, but simply by a desire for money, put a stop to the rascally business.

But if, as has been frankly allowed, Collier's exposure of the vices of the stage was wholly praiseworthy in its effects on virtue and morality, it seems equally certain that to the plays and authors of the time it was simply disastrous. In the three years immediately succeeding 1698, the notable new plays produced may be numbered on the fingers of one hand. The dramatists were ashamed, perhaps afraid, to write in their old dissolute style, and they had not learned a new one. To the effect of Collier's attack on authors and actors Dryden alludes in an address "To Mr. Granville, on his Excellent Tragedy, called *Heroic Love*."

" . . . thy blooming age
Can best, if any can, support the stage;
Which so declines, that shortly we may see
Players and plays reduced to second infancy:
Sharp to the world, but thoughtless of renown,
They plot not on the stage, but on the town,
And, in despair their empty pit to fill,
Set up some foreign monster in a bill.
Thus they jog on still tricking, never thriving,
And murdering plays, which they miscall reviving.

Our sense is nonsense, through their pipes conveyed ;
 Scarce can a poet know the play he made,
 'Tis so disguised in death ; nor thinks 'tis he
 That suffers in the mangled tragedy.
 Thus Itys first was killed, and after dressed
 For his own sire, the chief invited guest.
 I say not this of thy successful scenes,
 Where thine was all the glory, theirs the gains.
 With length of time, much judgment, and more toil,
 Not ill they acted, what they could not spoil.
 Their setting sun still shoots a glimmering ray,
 Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay ;
 And better gleanings their worn soil can boast
 Than the crab-vintage of the neighbouring coast."

There are several allusions of great interest in this address, giving as they do Dryden's criticisms on the position and conduct of the contemporary stage. Thus the lines—

"And, in despair their empty pit to fill,
 Set up some foreign monster in a bill"—

point at a blot by which Betterton's management, as well as that of Rich, was disfigured—the employment of foreign dancers and posture-makers. Downes says—

"In the space of Ten Years past, Mr. *Betterton* to gratify the Desires and Fancies of the Nobility and Gentry ; procur'd from Abroad the best *Dancers* and Singers, as Monsieur *L'Abbe*, Madam *Sublini*, Monsieur *Balon*, *Margarita Delpine*, *Maria Gallia* and divers others ; who being Exorbitantly Expensive, produc'd small Profit to him and his Company, but vast Gain to themselves : Madam *Delpine* since her arrival in *England*, by Modest Computation ; having got by the Stage and Gentry, above 10,000 Guineas."

Naturally the poets were up in arms against this sacrifice of sense to dumb-show and noise, and Rowe,

in the epilogue to his *Ambitious Stepmother*, produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, writes—

“ Show but a Mimick Ape, or French Buffoon, }
 You to the other House in Shoals are gone, }
 And leave us here to Tune our Crowds alone. }
 Must Shakespear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,
 Be left for Scaramouch and Harlaquin ? ”

In addition to this allusion to the shows and fripperies which disfigured the stage, Dryden's prologue is interesting for its reference to the capabilities of the rival companies. The Drury Lane actors took to themselves the accusation of “murdering plays ;” and Powell, in the preface to the *Fatal Discovery*, retaliated on Dryden in the following fashion :—

“ But, for the most mortal stroke against us, he charges us with downright *Murdering of Plays, which we miscall Reviving*. I will not derogate from the merit of those Senior Actors of both Sexes, at the other House, that shine in their several Perfections, in whose lavish Praises he is so highly transported ; But at the same time, he makes himself but an arbitrary judge on our side, to condemn unheard, and that under no less a conviction than Murder ; when I cannot learn (for a fair judgment upon us) that his Reverend Crutches have ever brought him within our doors since the division of the Companies.”

No doubt Powell and his companions were highly indignant also at Dryden's allusion to the “crab-vintage of the neighbouring coast.” Indeed, the rivalry between the two houses seems to have been conducted at this time with the utmost bitterness. Witness the following

“ Prologue, Spoke by Mr. *Powell*, in answer to a scurrilous one, spoke against him,* at *Betterton's* Booth in *Little-Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*.

* This was, no doubt, the prologue to Mrs. Pix's *Deceiver Deceived*, in which Powell was roundly abused, though not by name, for

As when a nauseous Vizor in the Pit,
Grossly abuses, without sense or wit,
All justifie her merited disgrace,
If they unvail the grievance of the place, }
And show the drab in her own ugly face. }
So, Gentlemen, we hope for your excuse, }
If in return for a dam'd-dull abuse, }
We pluck the Vizor off from t'other house : }
And let you see their natural grimaces
Affecting youth with pale autumnal faces.
Would it not any Ladies anger move
To see a child of sixty-five make love ?
Oh! my Statira! Oh, my angry dear, [Grunting like B.
Lord, what a dismal sound would that make here !
[Speaking like a Christian.
Now you must know, I've heard some people say,
Should this House fail, where do you think to play ?
Why thus, in short, my answer I declare,
If we must be o'ercome, I will take care
Never to be their Prisoner of War :
Nor tug an oar at the New Theatre."

The allusion to the veteran Betterton as “a child of sixty-five” is in the worst possible taste, but it is difficult to refrain from smiling at the description of the opposing theatre as “Betterton’s Booth in Little-Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields,” or at the distinction drawn in the stage-directions between “grunting like Betterton,” and “speaking like a Christian.”

I have already said that the notable plays produced during the years immediately following 1698 were few in number. At Drury Lane no play of any importance was produced in 1698; in 1699 one author only earned distinction. This was Farquhar, two of whose comedies were first played in that year. These were *Love and a* stealing the plot of this play, which had been submitted to him, and using it in his.

Bottle, and the famous comedy, *The Constant Couple*; or, *A Trip to the Jubilee*, which, bitterly criticized as it was by Gildon, who declared that it was only calculated to amuse Footmen, was so successful that the author got three benefits during its run. It was excellently cast, and the following list of the *dramatis personæ* will show that the younger comedians were no longer a despicable crew, and that they deserved the commendation which Farquhar gave them in his preface. "The beauties of action," he wrote, "gave the greatest life to the play, of which the town is so sensible, that all will join with me in commendation of the actors, and allow (without detracting from the merit of others) that the Theatre-Royal affords an excellent and complete set of comedians." These comedians were:—Sir Harry Wildair, Wilks; Beau Clincher, Pinkethman; Colonel Standard, Powell; Alderman Smuggler, Johnson; Clincher, Junior, Bullock; Vizard, Mills; Dicky, Norris; Tom Errand, Haines; Angelica, Mrs. Rogers; Lady Darling, Mrs. Powell; Parly, Mrs. Moor; Lady Lurewell, Mrs. Verbruggen.

Two reputations were confirmed by this play. Wilks played his part so well, that Farquhar declared in the preface that when the stage had the misfortune to lose Wilks, Sir Harry Wildair might go to the Jubilee; and Norris was so diverting as Dicky, that he was actually called by the name of "Jubilee Dicky" in many play-bills after this time.

Motteux was responsible for a mutilation of Fletcher's *Island Princess*, which he turned into an opera. This was produced at Drury Lane, apparently in the summer of 1699, and was successful only by reason of the meretricious attractions foisted on the original play. In a poem printed in *Poems on Affairs of State*, vol. iv. pp. 348-365, entitled "The Grove; or, The Rival

Muses" (1701), there are some lines referring to this play, which also contain a curious slash in passing at Farquhar's *Constant Couple*. They are—

"*Motteux* and *Durfey* are for nothing fit,
But to supply with Songs their want of Wit.
Had not the *Island Princess* been adorn'd,
With Tunes, and pompous Scenes, she had been scorn'd.
What was not *Fletcher's*, no more Sense contains,
Than he that wrote the *Jubilee*, has Brains ;
Which ne'er had pleas'd the Town, or purchas'd Fame,
But that 'twas christ'ned with a modish Name."

In 1700, with the exception of *The Secular Masque*, which Dryden wrote for the purpose of tacking to the end of Fletcher's *Pilgrim*, no new work of any value was produced ; but the season was notable for Cibber's alteration of *Richard III.*, which, though full of villainous clap-traps, mixed metaphors, and unmitigated nonsense, was so skilfully adapted for stage effect, that it has held the field until the present day. Farquhar's sequel to his *Constant Couple*, which he called *Sir Harry Wildair*, was the most notable play produced at Drury Lane in 1701 ; and I allude to another piece, Mrs. Trotter's tragedy of *The Unhappy Penitent*, only for the purpose of mentioning that from the prologue we gather that another union between the competing companies was already the subject of debate. The lines to which I refer are—

"But now the peaceful tattle of the town
Is how to join both houses into one."

At Lincoln's Inn Fields no remarkable play saw the light in 1698, for Granville's *Heroic Love*, in spite of Dryden's eulogy already quoted, is a very unnatural and absurd production, in which Homer's great Greeks are made sighing sentimentalists of approved romantic

pattern. Fancy Agamemnon raving about Chryseis in this fashion !

“ Empire and victory, be all forsaken,
 All but Chryseis—— Yes, ye partial Powers !
 To Plagues add Poverty, Disgrace, and Shame ;
 Strip me of all my Dignities and Crowns,
 Not one of all your curses will be felt
 Whilst I can keep this blessing. Take, oh ! take
 Your scepters back, and give ’em to my foes ;
 Give me but Life, and Love, and my Chryseis,
 ’Tis all I ask of Heaven.”

Downes declares that *Heroic Love* was “ Superlatively Writ ; a very good Tragedy, well Acted, and mightily pleas’d the Court and City.” It was certainly cast with the full strength of the company. Betterton played Agamemnon ; Verbruggen, Achilles ; Sandford, Ulysses ; Kynaston, Chryses ; and the female characters Chryseis and Briseis were sustained by Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle.

Another classical tragedy was the most noteworthy play of the next season (1699) ; but it had not even the accidental merit of being a popular success. This was *Iphigenia*, a dull production by John Dennis, founded on the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides. Downes considers that it was a good play, which is more than questionable, and states that it was well acted, which is no doubt correct, since Betterton played Orestes ; Mrs. Bracegirdle, Iphigenia ; and Mrs. Barry, the Queen of the Scythians, whom Orestes marries (according to Dennis). This travesty met with its due reward, for “ it answer’d not the Expences they were at in Cloathing it.”

At the end of this season, or the beginning of the next, the first part of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV.* was revived,

with alterations for which, it is supposed, Betterton was responsible. In this play the actor materially increased his reputation by his acting of Falstaff. Genest quotes Malone, who states, on the authority of a contemporary, that the wits of all qualities had been highly entertained with the humours of Sir John Falstaff in *Henry IV.*, which had drawn greater audiences than any recent new play. The critics, he adds, pronounced that Betterton was the best Falstaff that had been seen in that generation. Hotspur was played by Verbruggen, whom Betterton, now nearly three score years and ten, must have found great difficulty in hoisting on his shoulders in the last act. Mrs. Bowman played Katherine Percy, and the Hostess was acted by Mrs. Leigh. Encouraged by the success of this play, Betterton shortly afterwards revived the second part, again playing Falstaff. In connection with this character old Chetwood tells a story which shows Betterton in a delightful light. There was, it seems, a master-pavior in Dublin named Baker, who was an excellent actor of Falstaff. Ben Johnson, the comedian, saw him play, and being greatly struck by his impersonation, "when he return'd to England, he gave Mr. Betterton the manner of Baker's playing Falstaff, which the great actor not only approv'd of, but imitated, and allowed the manner was better than his own."

Measure for Measure was another revival in this season. It was mutilated, by Gildon it is said, and into it four musical entertainments were introduced, to enable the intelligent audience to sit out Shakespeare's play. Betterton acted the part of Angelo, two of whose speeches are so funny as to justify quotation. At the end of the first act Isabella asks Angelo, "At what hour shall I attend you, sir?" and he answers, "Soon as the Opera is over;" and in the next act he says—

"Consider on it, and at ten this evening,
If you'll comply, you'll meet me at the *Opera*."

Betterton's next Shakespearian or pseudo-Shakespearian character was Bassanio in the alteration of *The Merchant of Venice*, named *The Jew of Venice*. George Granville, Lord Lansdowne—Pope's "Granville the polite"—was one of those superior gentlemen who condescended to patronize Shakespeare, as being a sort of rude inspired creature who only wanted a little polishing to be a tolerable dramatist. In his preface to this play, Granville begins by apologizing for his choice of a subject, "The Foundation of the following Comedy being liable to some Objections, it may be wonder'd that any one should make Choice of it to bestow so much Labour upon;" and he winds up by explaining how much he has improved on Shakespeare, "What other Alterations have been requisite as to the change of Words, or single Lines, the Conduct of Incidents, and Method of Action throughout the whole Piece, to bring it into the Form and Compass of a Play, would be superfluous to examine, every Reader being able to satisfy himself, if he thinks fit, by comparing."

The changes which this scribbling lord made on the play were mainly in the direction of giving importance to Betterton's part. Bassanio, for instance, speaks Lorenzo's beautiful lines on music, *à propos* of a masque of *Peleus and Thetis* which is dragged into the second act; he has also some of Gratiano's lines; he is made by far the most prominent character in the trial-scene; and he speaks the "tag" to the play. In the trial-scene he carries himself like a proper tragedy-hero, and raves around in fine style—

"Stand off! I have a word in his behalf,
Since even more than in his Avarice,

In Cruelty this Jew's insatiable ;
 Here stand I for my friend. Body for Body,
 To endure the Torture : But one pound of flesh
 Is due from him : Take every piece of mine,
 And tear it off with Pincers : whatever way
 Invention may contrive to torture man,
 Practise on me : Let but my Friend go safe,
 Thy cruelty is limited on him ;
 Unbounded let it loose on me : Say, Jew,
 Here's Interest upon Interest in Flesh ;
 Will that content you ? ”

In the last act, too, Shakespeare makes very little fuss over Portia's supposed meeting with the learned Doctor to whom Bassanio had given her ring. A loose speech of three lines from Gratiano, and then Portia explains the mystery. But Granville would have no such trifling with a fine opportunity. If Shakespeare did not know a good chance when he saw it, Granville was not so stupid. So Bassanio has a speech to tear a cat in—

“ And can it be ? That by the secret workings
 Of Mystick words, and spells, and dire compounds,
 Potions and invocations horrible,
 Nature can be so led ? What then is Virtue ?
 And what security has Love or Reason
 Thus subjected to every Hell-born Hagg,
 Who, by such Conjurations can dis-join
 United Hearts ? uniting the Averse !
 How, wretched Man ! how can'st thou boast free Will ?
 If this in very deed be true. I'll not suppos't—
 But then that Ring ! How could she have it : 'tis Witch-
 craft !
 Damn'd, damn'd Witchcraft : And I will fathom Hell,
 But I will find a Fiend shall counter-work
 The Devil that has done this ! ”

Another of Granville's “improvements” is the degradation of Shylock into a comedy part by the introduction

of colloquialisms and familiar phrases. Shylock, too, as is well known, was acted by the famous comedian, Dogget, who returned to Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1701, and who played Shylock as a comedy character; which view was taken of it on the stage until, forty years later, Macklin's grim savagery was accepted as the true rendering of the "Jew, that Shakespeare drew." How far Dogget made Shylock comic it is impossible to say. It may be assumed with certainty that he did not make him the low-comedy Jew, such as the stage-Houndsditch produces, but it seems clear that he played the part comically. No other interpretation is possible of Downes's description of the actor: "He is the only Comick Original now Extant: witness, *Ben, Solon, Nikin, The Jew of Venice, &c.*"

Rowe's plays, *The Ambitious Stepmother* (1700), *Tamerlane* (1702), *The Fair Penitent* (1703), and *The Biter* (1704-5), afforded Betterton a series of excellent characters—Memnon, an old general who is a friend to Artaxerxes; Tamerlane himself; Horatio, the virtuous hero of *The Fair Penitent*; and Sir Timothy Tallapoy, an old East India merchant, the sworn foe of all "Biters"—that is, practical jokers. Dr. Johnson is very contemptuous to *The Biter*, and declares that Rowe was a failure as a comedy-writer; but I agree with old Genest thoroughly in his commendation of this piece. It is a brisk bustling farce, with an amusing plot, good humorous characters, and fairly bright dialogue. Johnson tells the story of Rowe's sitting in the theatre laughing vehemently at his own jokes while no one else smiled; but the anecdote lacks confirmation, for the piece ran six nights, and it is difficult to imagine that any audience should have been so depressed by a brisk farce as to sit so mumchance as the story implies.

The run of the excellent tragedy, *The Fair Penitent*, was interrupted by a ludicrous accident, which is related by Chetwood. In the fifth act the body of Lothario lies on a bier in all the solemnity of stage appurtenances of woe. Of course, the actor who plays Lothario does not officiate as his corpse, but a "dresser" supplies his place. On this occasion Powell, who had joined Betterton's company, was the Lothario, and his dresser, Warren by name, lay in state on the bier, decked out in the coat and periwig of the deceased, and plastered with white powder to represent the hue of death. Powell, forgetting the situation of his man, and requiring his services, shouted loudly for him, and Warren as loudly replied, "Here, sir!" from the stage. Powell then roared, "Come here this moment, you ——, or I'll break all the bones in your skin!" and Warren, knowing that his irascible master would in all likelihood do his best to keep his promise, jumped up with all his sables round him, which unfortunately were tied fast to the handles of the bier. The audience, of course, roared with laughter, and Warren, growing desperate, dragged the bier after him, knocked down Mrs. Barry, who played Calista, and, with a final frantic effort, burst his bonds and rushed off the stage. The curtain fell amid "immoderate fits of laughter; even the grave Mr. Betterton 'Smil'd in the Tumult, and enjoy'd the Storm.'" But he withdrew the tragedy until the memory of Warren's escapade had faded somewhat from the popular mind.

Betterton, who in 1705 reached the three score years and ten allotted to man, had had more than enough of the cares of management. His physical powers were affected by his great age and by the pains of gout to which he was a martyr. So early as 1701 we meet with an allusion to his failing strength, in Tom Brown's

Letters from the Dead. In the "Letter of News from Mr. Joseph Haines, of Merry Memory," which is dated December 21, 1701, the question is asked, "And pray, sir, how doth Mr. Betterton's lungs hold out?" Anthony Aston, too, tells us that he was "in his latter Time a little paralytic." In 1698 Dryden writes of Betterton and his companions—

"Their setting sun still shoots a glimmering ray,
Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay."

And Downes, whose chronicle stops at 1706, writes with genuine affection and admiration of his great idol, "The first and now only remain of the old Stock, of the Company of Sir William Davenant in Lincolns-Inn-Fields; he like an old Stately Spreading Oak now stands fixt, Environ'd round with brave Young Growing, Flourishing Plants."

Had the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre been a success, it is probable that even his infirmities might not have caused Betterton to resign. But, after various fluctuations of fortune, the star of Drury Lane was in the ascendant. Even so early as 1700 the younger company had gained great popularity, for in that year we find Betterton, in the prologue to Gildon's *Measure for Measure*, complaining almost pathetically of the public desertion. The lines are—

"To please this Winter, we all meanes have us'd ;
Old playes have been reviv'd, and New produc'd ;
But you, it seems, by US, wou'd not be serv'd ;
And others thrive, while we were almost starv'd.
Our House you daily shun'd, yet theirs you cram'd,
And flock'd to see the very plays you damn'd.
In vain you prais'd our Action, and our Wit ;
The best applause is in a crowded Pit."

Farquhar, too, in the prologue which he furnished for

Craufurd's *Courtship-à-la-Mode* (1700), exults in the failures of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company in the following ill-natured lines—

“Custom makes modern wives break marriage vows,
And Custom damns most plays at t'other house.”

The disorders and irregularities which had always disfigured the management of the old actors did not, as may be easily understood, decrease as years went on. Barton Booth frequently talked to Colley Cibber of the troubles of Betterton's last years of leadership, of which the old man often complained to Booth, then a young actor full of sympathy for the great chief whom he adored, and of whom he said, “Divinity hung round that man.”

To add to their other troubles, the older company laboured under the disadvantage of playing in a small theatre; the building in which they acted having been originally a tennis court of the lesser size—a court *carrée*, as it is called. To obviate this disadvantage, a project was formed of building for them a magnificent new theatre in the Haymarket. Sir John Vanbrugh was the originator of the idea, and he succeeded in getting thirty persons of quality to subscribe one hundred guineas each to aid the undertaking. Cibber saw the first stone laid, which bore the inscription, “The Little Whig,” in honour of the great toast of the Whig party, Lady Sunderland. The building was ready for occupation in April, 1705; and on March 31 of that year the old actors played for the last time in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The occasion was the benefit of Cave Underhill, and the play was Shadwell's capital comedy, *The Virtuoso*. This was the last day of Betterton's career as a manager, for before the new theatre opened he transferred such authority as he had to Vanbrugh, and was henceforth only a salaried actor.

CHAPTER VII.

THOMAS BETTERTON (1705-1710).

THE history of Vanbrugh and his theatre no longer belongs to our subject, the era of Colley Cibber having begun; and all that is left for us to do is to mention the principal characters undertaken by Betterton in his few remaining years. Several parts in famous plays were among these, such as Melantius in *The Maid's Tragedy*, Morose in *The Silent Woman*, Dominic in *The Spanish Friar*, and Leontius in *The Humorous Lieutenant*. Among his original characters there were none of great importance, the best being probably Don Alvarez in Vanbrugh's comedy of *The Mistake*. His last original part was apparently Virginius, in John Dennis's tragedy of *Appius and Virginia*. This piece was not a success, but it has contributed a proverbial saying to our language. Dennis invented for this play a new method of producing stage-thunder, and some nights after the withdrawal of the unsuccessful tragedy he, being in the pit, heard his thunder used in *Macbeth*. He at once arose in a violent passion, exclaiming, "See how these rascals use me; they won't let my play run, and yet *they steal my thunder!*"

Among the Shakespearian characters which the great player acted in his last years were King Lear, Macbeth,

Othello, Henry VIII., Falstaff, and Hamlet. He played Hamlet on Tuesday, September 20, 1709, and, though nearly seventy-five years old, he gave a perfect representation of the Young Prince of Denmark. Fortunately, a record of this very performance has been preserved for us in the pages of the *Tatler*, which shows the wonderful inspiration of the veteran player.

"I was going on in reading my Letter," writes Steele, "when I was interrupted by Mr. Greenhat, who has been this evening at the play of *Hamlet*. Mr. *Bickerstaff*, said he, had you been to-night at the play-house, you had seen the force of action in perfection: your admired Mr. *Betterton* behaved himself so well, that, though now about seventy, he acted youth, and by the prevalent power of proper manner, gesture, and voice, appeared through the whole drama a youth of great expectation, vivacity, and enterprise. The soliloquy, where he began the celebrated sentence of 'To be, or not to be'—the expostulation, where he explains with his mother in her closet, the noble ardour, after seeing his father's ghost, and his generous distress for the death of *Ophelia*, are each of them circumstances which dwell strongly upon the minds of the audience."

Even Anthony Aston, writing professedly to point out defects which Cibber had not indicated, praises Betterton's Hamlet even when he seems to dispraise him.

"I have often wish'd," says Anthony, "that Mr. *Betterton* would have resign'd the part of HAMLET to some young Actor, (who might have Personated, though not have Acted, it better), for, when he threw himself at *Ophelia's* Feet, he appear'd a little too grave for a young Student, lately come from the University of *Wirtemberg*; and his *Repartees* seem'd rather as *Apophthegms* from a sage *Philosopher*, than the *sporting Flashes* of a Young HAMLET; and no one else could have pleas'd the Town, he was so rooted in their Opinion."

Nicholas Rowe, too, who can only have seen Betterton

in his later years, has recorded his high opinion of the actor's genius.

"I cannot leave Hamlet," he writes, "without taking notice of the advantage with which we have seen this masterpiece of Shakspeare distinguish itself upon the stage, by Mr. Betterton's fine performance of that part. A man, who, though he had no other good qualities, as he has a great many, must have made his way into the esteem of all men of letters, by this only excellency. No man is better acquainted with Shakspeare's manner of expression, and indeed he has studied him so well, and is so much a master of him, that whatever part of his he performs, he does it as if it had been written on purpose for him, and that the author had exactly conceived it as he plays it."

And in another place Rowe records Betterton's enthusiasm for everything connected with our great dramatist, acknowledging that he was indebted for most of the facts contained in his *Life of Shakspeare* to Betterton, who, in his old age, made a special pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon to glean information regarding the poet's life.

It is scarcely necessary to say that in these later years Betterton acted comparatively seldom. We have actual figures regarding his appearances in 1708-9, which show that he played only sixteen times in the season of twenty-two weeks and three days. We learn this from a curious advertisement published in defence of Christopher Rich, with whom his actors were quarrelling; and from it we learn also that Betterton's salary was *four pounds a week*! But this did not represent his entire earnings; for he received one pound a week as a sort of pension to his wife, who no longer acted; he got from his benefit "at common prices," £76 4s. 5d.; and his drawings from presents and special tickets at his benefit were computed at an additional four hundred and fifty pounds!

This last amount was a very large and very unusual sum to be yielded by a benefit, and must not be taken as an ordinary annual receipt from this source. In fact, it was probably an unprecedented amount, and one that has seldom been approached since. This famous benefit took place at Drury Lane on April 7, 1709, and was announced as "By the desire of several Persons of Quality, for Betterton's Benefit." The play was Congreve's *Love for Love*, and three great players who were not members of the company came to support their honoured comrade. Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle had retired from the stage, but both returned for this night to play their famous characters of Angelica and Mrs. Frail; while Dogget, who was not engaged at Drury Lane, appeared in the character of Ben, which he had made peculiarly his own. Betterton himself played Valentine. The first number of the *Tatler* describes the crowd and the excitement on this famous occasion—

"On Thursday last was acted for the benefit of Mr. *Betterton*, the celebrated comedy called *Love for Love*. Those excellent players, Mrs. *Barry*, Mrs. *Bracegirdle*, and Mr. *Dogget*, though not at present concerned in the house, acted on that occasion. There has not been known so great a concourse of persons of distinction; the stage itself was covered with gentlemen and ladies, and when the curtain was drawn, there appeared also a very splendid audience. This unusual encouragement, which was given to a play for the advantage of so great an actor, gives an undeniable instance that the true relish for manly entertainment and rational pleasures is not wholly lost. All the parts were acted to perfection, and there seemed a peculiar regard had to their behaviour on this occasion; no one was guilty of the affectation to insert witticisms of his own, but a due respect had to the audience, for encouraging this accomplished player. It is not now doubted but plays will revive, and take their usual place in the opinion of persons of wit and merit, notwithstanding

their late apostacy in favour of dress and sound. This place is very much altered since Mr. *Dryden* frequented it. . . . But however the company is altered, all have shown a great respect for Mr. *Betterton*; and the very gaming part of this house . . . in this gentleman have pitied *Mark Antony* of Rome, *Hamlet* of Denmark, *Mithridates* of Pontus, *Theodosius* of Greece, and *Henry the Eighth* of England. It is well known he has been in the condition of each of those illustrious personages for several hours together, and behaved himself in those high stations, in all the changes of the scene, with suitable dignity. For these reasons we intend to repeat this late favour to him on a proper occasion, lest he who can instruct us so well in personating feigned sorrows may not be lost to us by suffering under real ones."

Steele having shown us the artistic and intellectual side of this great benefit, let us turn to the advertisement before alluded to for the prosaic and pecuniary side. It reads—

"Note, that Mr. Betterton having had 76*l.* 4*s.* 5*d.* as above mentioned, for two-thirds of the profits by a benefit play, reckoning his tickets for the boxes at 5*s.* a piece, the pit at 3*s.*, the first gallery at 2*s.*, and the upper gallery at 1*s.*—But the boxes, pit, and stage, laid together on his day, and no person admitted but by his tickets, the lowest at half a guinea a ticket; nay he had much more, for one lady gave him ten guineas, some five guineas, some two guineas, and most one guinea, supposing that he designed not to act any more, and he delivered tickets out for more persons than the boxes, pit, and stage could hold; it is thought he cleared at least 450*l.*, over and besides the 76*l.* 4*s.* 5*d.*"

The epilogue spoken on this occasion was written by Rowe, and was delivered by Mrs. Barry under conditions of unusual interest, for Betterton himself stood in the centre, supported on one hand by Mrs. Barry, and on the other by Mrs. Bracegirdle. The scene must have been supremely affecting, and it is not difficult to imagine that at certain passages both actors and audience were deeply

moved. The epilogue is of sufficient interest to justify quotation.

“ As some brave knight, who once with spear and shield,
 Had sought renown in many a well-fought field,
 But now no more with sacred fame inspir'd,
 Has to a peaceful hermitage retir'd ;
 There, if by chance disastrous tales he hears,
 Of matrons' wrongs and captive virgins' tears,
 He feels soft Pity urge his gen'rous breast,
 And vows once more to succour the distress'd.
 Buckled in mail he sallies on the plain,
 And turns him to the feats of arms again.
 So we to former Leagues of Friendship true,
 Have bid once more our peaceful homes adieu }
 To aid Old THOMAS, and to pleasure you.
 Like Errant Damsels boldly we engage,
 Arm'd, as you see, for the defenceless stage.
 Time was when this good man no help did lack,
 And scorn'd that any She should hold his back.
 But now, so Age and Frailty have ordain'd,
 By two at once he's forced to be sustain'd.
 You see, what failing Nature brings man to, }
 And yet let none insult, for ought we know, }
 She may not wear so well with some of you : }
 Tho' old, you find his strength is not clean past,
 But true as steel, he's mettle to the last.
 If better he perform'd in days of yore,
 Yet now he gives you all that's in his pow'r ; }
 What can the youngest of you all do more ? }
 What he has been, though present praise be dumb, }
 Shall haply be a Theme in times to come, }
 As now we talk of ROSCIUS, and of Rome.
 Had you with-held your favours on this night,
 Old Shakespear's Ghost had ris'n to do him right.
 With indignation had you seen him frown
 Upon a worthless, witless, tasteless Town ;
 Griev'd and repining you had heard him say, }
 Why are the Muses' Labours cast away ? }
 Why did I only write what only he could play ? }

But since, like friends to wit, thus throng'd you meet,
 Go on, and make the generous work complete ;
 Be true to merit, and still own his cause,
 Find something for him more than bare applause.
 In just remembrance of your pleasures past,
 Be kind, and give him a discharge at last ;
 In peace and ease life's remnant let him wear,
 And hang his consecrated buskin here."

Another year passed away, and the old actor's benefit again came round. The *Tatler* warmly recommended the veteran's claims,* and a great audience that filled the huge theatre in the Haymarket again was drawn together. But Betterton was suddenly seized with gout, and although by violent remedies he so far recovered as to play *Melantius* with such fire and spirit as to arouse more than usual enthusiasm, he did not recover from the attack. The consequence of tampering with the disease was that the gout flew into his head and killed him. He died April 28, 1710, and on May 2 his body was laid in Westminster Abbey, in the east cloister, at the south end.

Mrs. Betterton survived her husband, and, as Steele states, was so distressed at his death that she lost her reason. She appears to have been of a thoughtful and melancholy temper, being in that respect a complete contrast to Betterton himself, who was cheerful and sanguine in temperament. Mrs. Betterton had retired from the stage about 1695. Of her powers as an actress Cibber gives a very favourable account. He says—

* "Mr. Bickerstaff, in consideration of his ancient friendship and acquaintance with Mr. Betterton, and great esteem for his merits, summons all his Disciples, whether dead or living, mad or tame, Toasts, Smarts, Dappers, Pretty Fellows, Musicians or Scrapers, to make their appearance at the Playhouse in the Hay-Market, on Thursday next ; when there will be a play acted for the Benefit of the said Mr. Betterton" (*Tatler*, No. 157, April 11, 1710).

"Mrs. Betterton, tho' far avanc'd in years, was so great a Mistress of Nature that even Mrs. *Barry*, who acted the Lady *Macbeth* after her, could not in that Part, with all her superior Strength and Melody of Voice, throw out those quick and careless Strokes of Terror from the Disorder of a guilty Mind, which the other gave us with a Facility in her Manner that render'd them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her Skill, tho' he had brought her Person to decay. She was, to the last, the Admiration of all true Judges of Nature and Lovers of *Shakespear*, in whose Plays she chiefly excell'd, and without a Rival. When she quitted the Stage several good Actresses were the better for her Instruction. She was a Woman of an unblemish'd and sober life, and had the Honour to teach Queen *Anne*, when Princess, the Part of *Semandra* in *Mithridates*, which she acted at Court in King *Charles's* time. After the Death of Mr. *Betterton*, her Husband, that Princess, when Queen, order'd her a Pension for Life, but she liv'd not to receive more than the first half Year of it."

In this last statement Cibber is probably inaccurate, unless, indeed, the pension were not granted immediately on Betterton's death; for his widow survived him two years. Before her death she must have recovered her reason, for she made a will on March 10, 1712, by which she bequeathed to her sister, Mrs. Mary Head, the sum of twenty pounds, and to her residuary legatee, Mrs. Frances Williamson, her husband's portrait. There are several other legacies—among them twenty shillings each for rings to Mrs. Bracegirdle, Wilks, Dogget, and Mrs. Anne Betterton. The will was proved in the following month. The bequests were payable "out of the arrears of that pension which her Majesty had been graciously pleased to grant her," so that we may assume that Mrs. Betterton was by no means in prosperous circumstances. She received a benefit at Drury Lane on June 4, 1711, when *The Man of Mode* was played "at the particular

Desire of several Ladies of Quality, for the Benefit of the Widow of the late Famous *Tragedian*, Mr. *Betterton*." Mrs. Betterton's death occurred in April, 1712, and on the 13th of that month she was laid beside her husband in Westminster Abbey.

There is little to add to this record of Thomas Betterton's career. He was above all an earnest artist, whose life was in his work, and beyond that work there is little to tell. I have, therefore, only to add a few personal particulars, to fill in a few touches to complete my picture of this great actor.

With his face we are all familiar, thanks to that beautiful portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller, which has been so often reproduced. It is impossible to look at him without being impressed by the dignity and sweetness of his mien, the intelligence of his eye, and the expressiveness of his lips. Anthony Aston, who is nothing if not critical, tells us that Betterton was "a little pock-fretten;" he also states that he had a large head, and a short thick neck; but, he adds, "his aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic." In figure he was strong and athletic, not much above the middle height, and rather "inclining to the corpulent;" yet, "however formed, there arose from the harmony of the whole a commanding mien of majesty, which the fairer-faced or (as Shakespear calls 'em) the *curled* darlings of his time ever wanted something to be equal masters of."

Betterton's voice, like his person, was manly rather than sweet; a voice of more strength than melody; better adapted to give effect to the rage and jealousy of Othello than the sighs and tenderness of Castalio. Such is Cibber's account; and Aston writes to much the same effect, though he does not put it quite so pleasantly. "His voice," says Anthony, "was low and grumbling;

yet he could tune it by an artful climax, which enforced universal attention even from the Fops and Orange-Girls"—which we may take as the highest compliment that could be paid to an actor. How Betterton used his voice Cibber tells us with honest enthusiasm: "I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfied; which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever." But not only in tragedy did Betterton excel. In comedy, says Cibber, "he had a natural gravity that gave strength to good sense, a tempered spirit that gave life to wit, and a dry reserve in his smile that threw ridicule into its brightest colours." And we have no reason to think Cibber's admiration extravagant or over-acted; for Anthony Aston winds up his carping description of the great actor with sentences as cordial and appreciative as any of honest Colley's: "If I was to write of him all day, I should remember fresh matter in his behalf;" and "To end with this *Phoenix* of the Stage, I must say of him, as Hamlet does of his father, 'He was a man (take him for all in all) I cannot look upon his like again.'"

In disposition and in character Betterton appears to have been as lovable as he was admirable in art. How delightfully amiable a picture of the great actor is given by Davies in the story of Cibber's first salary!

"Mr. Richard Cross," he writes, "late prompter of Drury-lane theatre, gave me the following history of Colley Cibber's first establishment as a hired actor. He was known only, for some years, by the name of Master Colley. After waiting impatiently a long time for the prompter's notice, by good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a message on the stage, in some play, to Betterton. Whatever was the cause, Master Colley was so terrified, that the scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton asked, in some anger, who the

young fellow was that had committed the blunder. Downes replied, 'Master Colley.'—'Master Colley! then forfeit him.'—'Why, sir,' said the prompter, 'he has no salary.'—'No!' said the old man; 'why then put him down ten shillings a week, and forfeit him 5s.'"

Nor was Betterton's amiability confined to the lighter affairs of life, for we have knowledge of one action at least of the highest magnanimity. He was engaged by one of his friends, Sir Francis Watson, in a trading adventure to the West Indies. As has been already mentioned, the adventure miscarried, and the savings of many years of hard work were lost. But the friend who had persuaded Betterton to join in the speculation was utterly ruined, and the revenge of the old actor was to adopt the daughter of his friend as his own child, to educate and train her, until she was old enough to earn her living on the stage, and to marry John Bowman, a noted singer and an intelligent actor.

If such was the great mind of the man, it is not surprising that he won the love and admiration of his fellow-actors; that he numbered among his friends such men as Archbishop Tillotson, John Dryden, and Sir Richard Steele; and that, in his old age, he inspired the youthful Pope with an enthusiastic regard for him.* To the respect and esteem with which he inspired Steele we owe that beautiful *Tatler* which records for us Betterton's funeral, and with a quotation from which I close this attempt to picture a great player, who demands our admiration for his genius as an actor as well as our respect for his blameless life.

* Pope painted a portrait of Betterton, which is still to be seen in the Earl of Mansfield's collection at Caen House. He also published a modernization of some of Chaucer's poems in Betterton's name, though they were, no doubt, the poet's own productions.

“Having received notice that the famous actor, Mr. Betterton, was to be interred this evening in the cloisters, near Westminster-abbey, I was resolved to walk thither, and see the last office done to a man whom I always very much admired, and from whose action I had received more strong impressions of what is great and noble in human nature, than from the arguments of the most solid philosophers, or the descriptions of the most charming poets I had ever read. . . . While I walked in the cloisters, I thought of him with the same concern as if I waited for the remains of a person who had in real life done all that I had seen him represent. The gloom of the place, and faint lights before the ceremony appeared, contributed to the melancholy disposition I was in ; and I began to be extremely afflicted, that Brutus and Cassius had any difference, that Hotspur’s gallantry was so unfortunate, and that the mirth and good humour of Falstaff could not exempt him from the grave. Nay, this occasion in me, who look upon the distinctions amongst men to be merely scenical, raised reflections upon the emptiness of all human perfection and greatness in general, and I could not but regret, that the sacred heads which lie buried in the neighbourhood of this little portion of earth in which my poor old friend is deposited, are returned to dust as well as he, and that there is no difference in the grave between the imaginary and the real monarch. This made me say of human life itself with Macbeth—

“‘To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in a stealing pace from day to day,
To the last moment of recorded time !
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
To their eternal night ! Out, out, short candle !
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.’”

CHARACTERS PLAYED BY BETTERTON,

In addition to those mentioned in text (see Genest, ii. 458).

- 1661. Solyman in *Siege of Rhodes* (1st and 2nd parts);
Pallatine the Elder in *Wits*; Alvaro in *Love and Honour*.
- 1663. *Don Henrique in *Adventures of Five Hours*; *Iberio in *Slighted Maid*; *Filamor in *Step-Mother*.
- 1664. *Philander in *Rivals*; *Owen Tudor in *Henry V.* (Orrery).
- 1665. *Solyman in *Mustapha*.
- 1667. *Cambyses.
- 1671. *Ladislaus in *Juliana*; *Art in *Mr. Anthony*.
- 1672. *Bevil in *Epsom Wells*; *Alcippus in *Forced Marriage*.
- 1673. *Townlove in *Morning Ramble*; *Crimalhaz in *Empress of Morocco*.
- 1676. *Don John in *Libertine*; *Solyman in *Ibrahim*; *Lord Bellamour in *Madam Fickle*; *Sylvano in *Pastor Fido*.
- 1677. *Orontes in *Siege of Babylon*; *Abdelazar.
- 1678. *Achilles in *Destruction of Troy*; *Wittmore in *Sir Patient Fancy*; *Welford in *Squire Oldsapp*; *Vitelli in *Counterfeits*.
- 1679. *Galliard in *Feigned Courtezans*.
- 1680. *Theocrin in *Loyal General*; *Lorenzo in *Loving Enemies*.
- 1681. *Gloucester in *Henry VI.*, Part I. (by Crown); *Warwick in 2nd part; *Tom Wilding in *City Heiress*; *Nemours in *Princess of Cleve*.
- 1682. *Piercy in *Virtue Betrayed*.
- 1683. Arbaces in *King and no King*.
- 1684. *Crispus in *Constantine*; *Beaugard in *Atheist*; *Alphonso in *Disappointment*.
- 1688. *Rheusanes in *Injured Lovers*.
- 1689. *Bellamy in *Bury Fair*.
- 1690. *Admiral of France in *Massacre of Paris*.

1691. *King Arthur; Sir Ralph in *Merry Devil of Edmonton*.
 1692. *Gunderic in *Rape*; *Regulus; *Henry II.
 1696. *Cyrus; *Railmore in *Love's a Jest*; *Woodvil in *Country Wake*; *Bellamour in *She Gallants*; *Bellair in *Lover's Luck*; *Osman in *Royal Mischief*.
 1697. *Grammont in *Unnatural Brother*; *Cassibelan in *Boadicea*; *Sanserre in *Intrigues at Versailles*; *Sir Charles Beauclair in *Innocent Mistress*.
 1698. *Owen Tudor in *Queen Catherine*; *Vincentio in *Beauty in Distress*; *Gramont in *Fatal Friendship*; *Bondi in *Deceiver Deceived*.
 1699. *Artabanus in *Xerxes*; *Rinaldo; *Doria in *Princess of Parma*; *Zoilus in *Friendship Improved*; *Orestes in *Iphigenia*.
 1700. *Fainall in *Way of the World*; *Virginius in *Fate of Capua*.
 1701. *Courtine in *Ladies' Visiting Day*; *Rhesus in *Love's Victim*.
 1702. *Clorimon in *Altemira*.
 1703. *Iopano in *Governor of Cyprus*.
 1703-4. *Mahomet IV. in *Abra-Mulé*; *Miramont in *Liberty Asserted*; Antony in *All for Love*; *Lovewell in *Squire Trelooby*.
 1704-5. *Lovewell in *Gamester*.
 1705-6. *Ulysses; *Marus in *Faithful General*; *Arwide in *Revolution of Sweden*; *Coelius in *British Enchanters*.
 1706-7. *Beamont in *Platonic Lady*; *Almanzor in *Almyna*; Montezuma in *Indian Emperor*; Antonio in *Adventures of Five Hours*; *Theseus in *Phædra*.
 1708. Emperor in *Aurenge-Zebe*; Mithridates.
 1708-9. Thersites in *Troilus* (Dryden).
 Betterton probably played *Manly in *Plain Dealer* and Bellamy in *Evening's Love*.

* Originally played by Betterton.

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